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*The Light of the Cross in the
twentieth century*

James Gibbons

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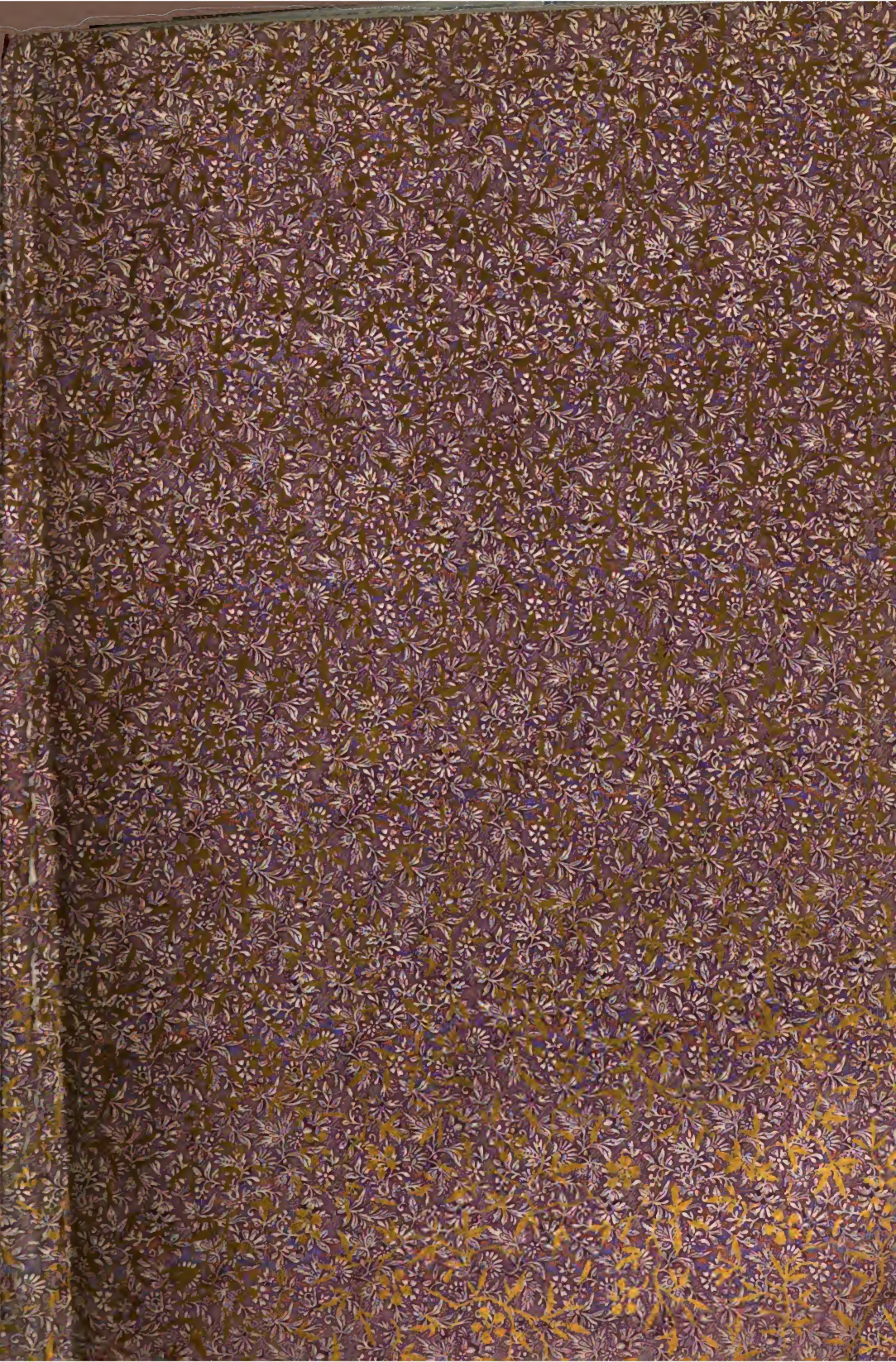


BEQUEST OF

JEREMIAH CURTIN

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CHRIST OR DIANA.—Edwin Long.—One of the best known of this eminent English artist's pictures, representing the form in which the alternative of martyrdom or offering of heathen sacrifice—incense to Diana—was presented to the heroes of early Christianity.

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The
Light of the Cross
In The
Twentieth Century

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON MODERN CIVILIZATION

Her Treatment of the Great Moral and Social Problems of Our Own Time, By Master Minds. The Foundation, History and Progress of Her Great Educational Institutions In the United States. Her Great Religious Orders of Men and Women for Spreading The Gospel and Teaching Secular and Religious Knowledge. The History of the Organization, Development and Aims of the Great Catholic Fraternal Societies of the United States and Their National Federation with many other important subjects.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH MADE
MANIFEST TO THE MODERN MIND

FROM THE PENS OF

The Paulist Fathers and other Eminent Authorities

As Indicated throughout the Work.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER BY

HIS EMINENCE JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS.

SUMPTUOUSLY ILLUSTRATED

Volume III.

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Jeremiah Curtin



Nihil Obstat

Remigius Lafort, S. T. L.
CENSOR.

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The Clerics of the Common Life.

From the Rev. John Talbot Smith.

Catholic Brotherhoods in the United States—an Authoritative Sketch of the Different Communities, their Reason for Existence, their Aims, their Manner of Life, and the Actual Work They Do.

OF twelve thousand priests in the United States, three thousand belong to the monastic bodies, besides some fifteen

hundred novices and three thousand lay brothers; and of all these very few ever return to secular life, although it is fairly easy to do so. Of the total of seven thousand five hundred, the Jesuit order includes more than a quarter, though its rules are among the most severe.

Life in a clerical community is as rough and severe as that of a soldier in a camp. It is a life of poverty, for the monk and the community priest and layman get no salaries, only the most ordinary sort of a living,



A CARMELITE, OR MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL, COMMONLY CALLED THE WHITE FRIARS—THERE ARE CARMELITE CONVENTS IN THE DIOCESES OF NEWARK, BALTIMORE, PITTSBURG, ST. LOUIS, LEAVENWORTH, AND NEW ORLEANS.

The Capuchins, Instituted in 1528.

the plainest clothes, and the rudest fare. It is a life of military discipline, where obedience is the law, and disobedience meets with swift retribution. Its one material advantage is that the members live secure against sickness and old age, sure of proper support and care.



A CAPUCHIN FRIAR—THE CAPUCHINS ARE A BRANCH OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER, FOUNDED IN ITALY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, AND REPRESENTED BY SEVERAL MONASTERIES IN THE UNITED STATES.

The first aim of the monastic life is spirituality. This is the essential reason of its existence, and the chief attraction for its devotees. In the well-ruled convent, with its appointed hours of labor and of prayer, the inmates may ward off the intrusion of the world, and in silence practise those virtues of obedience, patience, poverty, chastity, and humility which should be the excellent property of every member of a community. The secondary aim is a particular work, such as study, teaching, preaching, and looking after the spiritual and physical needs of men.

The members of these communities vary in rank and condition according to the constitution of the society. In a community like the Paulists, the members are all priests; whereas with the Benedictines they are divided into two classes, priests and lay

brothers, who live under the same general law, but each according to the duties of his state. Again some communities, like the Alexians and the Brothers of the Christian Schools, are made up entirely of laymen.

Dominican Order, founded by St. Dominic, 1216.

In this country there are about forty different communities of men engaged in the double work of personal sanctification and of the instruction and sanctification of others.

From the social point of view, the reason of their existence may be considered economic; that is, the double work which they are called upon to perform is done more cheaply and powerfully by means of the community. The members of the community have the benefit of mutual encouragement and sympathy in the works of sanctification and charity. Their entire earnings are expended for the benefit of their order and for the salvation of men. They receive a good education, and are fitted with proper leisure for their vocation. Backed by the community, they can undertake any sort of work, and can serve at any point where the need is keenest.

All sorts and conditions of young Americans are won by the religious life, which is the common term for the monastic condition. For example, Father Deshon, present head of the Paulist community, was a classmate of Grant at West Point, later an officer in the army, and a non-Catholic to boot. One of his brethren, Father Robinson recently deceased, was a Confederate soldier in the Civil War, and entered the community while a prisoner on parole in New



A DOMINICAN, OR BLACK FRIAR—THE DOMINICANS (FOUNDED IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY) AND THE FRANCISCANS WERE AMONG THE LEADING ORDERS OF THE CHURCH UNTIL THE RISE OF THE JESUITS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Trappists, Branch of Cistercians, founded 1662.

York. Fathers Campbell and Pardow, two eminent members of the Jesuit community; Father McMillan, the Paulist; Father Wilson, the Dominican; Father Fidelis, the Passionist; Brother Justin, of the Christian Brothers, were all city boys who played ball with ardor, swam in the lordly Hudson, and went through the ordinary phases of American boy life.

Why these men became members of a community instead of entering a diocese would probably require a personal explanation from each. In general it may be answered that with such men the ideal life is always the sacerdotal; and in order to attain their ideal of the sacerdotal, the careful preparation and stable routine of the community life seemed the best means. These men are usually of the psychological stamp that sees and feels the end of all things almost as soon as it sees and feels the beginning. They feel the brevity of life and its importance as soon as they become conscious of it at all; and therefore they are imbued early with the necessity of making the most of every minute and of all their capacities and opportunities. Consequently, they strip like athletes for the fray, leaving aside all things that usually appeal to men, and embracing the conditions of the religious life as the best means to their end.

The daily routine of a community member **has not an** inviting appearance on paper, although the West Point cadet **lives up to**



A CISTERCIAN OR TRAPIST MONK IN THE WHITE CASSOCK OF HIS ORDER—THE CISTERCIANS HAVE MONASTERIES AT GETHSEMANE, IN KENTUCKY, AND NEAR DUBUQUE, IOWA.

The Congregation of St. Paul, New York City

a rule based upon the old monastic routine ; with the difference that while the monk divides his time between the service of God and that of his neighbor, the cadet divides it between himself and the government. The rising hour is about five o'clock ; from one to two hours are devoted to prayer and meditation ;



THE LATE FATHER HEWIT, SUPERIOR OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARY
PRIESTS OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE,
COMMONLY CALLED THE PAULIST
FATHERS, AN ORDER FOUNDED
IN NEW YORK, IN 1858, FOR
MISSION WORK.

after breakfast and a brief rest comes labor until noon ; the afternoon is filled in with recreation for an hour and some hours of labor, closing with devotions before supper ; and the evening is passed in the same fashion. Recreation is usually taken in common. This feature is strenuously insisted upon by all communities for the strengthening of the brotherly ties among the members.

The routine is rather pleasant, though perhaps at times soporific. This quality is easily removed by the daily trials, which, if not calamitous, are a severe test of human nature. The accommodations of a monastery or convent are primitive and rude, the fare is substantial and simple, but trying to the susceptible American stomach, and the close companionship of the members brings out personal

weaknesses promptly and irritatingly. The working of the rules of poverty and obedience is utterly unpoetic, and as hard on poor nature as may be. While the members get used to these things, they still suffer hardships quite unknown to us. However that is their business, and their success in it earns for them their crown.

Teaching Brotherhood founded by St. de La Salle.

Each community has its characteristics so marked that the well-informed Catholic easily distinguishes between Benedictine and Franciscan, Jesuit and Dominican, Redemptorist and Vincentian. For the community sense, if we may so call it, is very

strong ; in fact, it must be strong if the body is to hold together. The members are trained to feel keenly the importance of the common life to their own salvation and to the salvation of men, and the particular importance of their own society. Hence the society feeling is almost as intense in the members as race feeling among laymen.

The secondary aim of each community is some particular work, which is eagerly sought as soon as membership and preparation will permit. An examination of the statistics shows that all the communities in the United States are engaged in three departments—education, charity work for men and boys, and parish and mission work. In the field of education the work of the communities has been singularly effective. The colleges of the Jesuits enjoy a high reputation, the Benedictines have many fine institutions in the



A CHRISTIAN BROTHER OR MEMBER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
—THIS ORDER CONSISTING OF LAY BROTHERS, IS DEVOTED TO THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR.

West, the Holy Cross Fathers have won a great success in their university at Notre Dame, Indiana, and the Brothers of the Christian Schools have been equally successful in the primary and grammar schools and in the college. The methods employed in these institutions are entirely their own, for the communities

The franciscan Order, founded in 1223.

are conservative, have fine teaching traditions, and adopt the new only when it has proved itself worthy. Without endowment, the Jesuits have managed to establish a good university at Georgetown, and the Notre Dame institution was begun and carried on in the same way; two instances that illustrate the powerful resources of well-ordered communities.

The charity work is entirely in the hands of the lay communities, for the sacerdotal bodies do not enter this field. The care of hospitals, orphan asylums, refuges, and protectories for men and boys engages the time and skill of half the entire body of community laymen. The most remarkable example of what they are able to do in fair circumstances is the Protectory at Westchester, in the suburbs of New York, which is said by experts to be the most successful of its kind in the world. In this home the Christian Brothers care for nearly two thousand boys, and give them a good training in various trades and employments.

Almost all the sacerdotal communities take their share in the parochial and mission work of the country; sometimes because it is part of their rule so to do, or because of the pressing need of the people. The Jesuits have a well-defined system in this regard. Their college and church are usually inseparable. If



A FRANCISCAN FRIAR—THIS ORDER, FOUNDED BY ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, AS A MENDICANT MISSIONARY ORDER, IS DISTINGUISHED BY ITS GRAY OR DARK BROWN COWL, A GIRDLE AND SANDALS.

The Society of Jesus.

they must choose, the college gets the preference, since the higher education of their own members and of the laity is their chief aim. Circumstances change this rule, as in the case of the Western missions, where they have only three colleges, but look after one hundred and twenty poor parishes that would otherwise lack proper care. The Jesuits are very proud of their Indian missions, as they have good reason to be. In the same way the Benedictines look after two hundred parishes through the West and South; the Capuchins also spare some members for the work, together with the Vincentians, Augustinians, and Franciscans. Perhaps the Cistercians alone, familiarly known as Trappists, adhere strictly to their own convents according to rule, and avoid parish work. Theirs is a contemplative community, whose members keep a life-long silence, practise vegetarianism on one meal a day, and cultivate the fields without and the learned studies within for the sake of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. The most peculiar work which the missionaries perform is the preaching of missions to the common people and retreats to the nuns and clergy. The communities reserve their best preachers and workers for this work.



A JESUIT, OR MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS, THE FAMOUS ORDER FOUNDED BY IGNATIUS LOYOLA IN 1534, PREACHING, SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, WORKS OF CHARITY, AND TEACHING CONSTITUTE THEIR EMPLOYMENTS. THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FOREMOST AS DEFENDERS OF THE CHURCH AND OF CATHOLIC TRUTH

The Teachings of Our Holy Religion

from the Gifted Pen of Monseigneur De Segur

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

THERE are many people, otherwise good and upright, who live without religion, and resemble pagans in the midst of Christian society; because they have no real knowledge of religion. Having no knowledge of it, or only a very superficial knowledge, they do not appreciate it; having no appreciation of it, they cannot love it; having no love for it, they do not dream of practising it.

Religion is that bond by which God is united to His creature, and the creature to his God. Religion is that sacred and necessary science which teaches us what God is, what He has done for us; what we are, what we must do for God; what life is, and what awaits us when life is ended.

There is one true religion, because there is one true God.

There is only one, because there is only one true God; and to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him constitutes religion; and this one true religion is the Christian or Catholic religion, in which you and I have had the happiness to be born. It is called Christian, because the divine centre of all its mysteries is Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man; Catholic, which means Universal, because it embraces all times, all people, and all places.

Religion, considered as a whole, may be classed under three great divisions: The first contains the truths that we must believe, because God has revealed them to us; the second contains the duties that we must practise, shows forth virtue and vice, and is called Christian morality; the third contains those means of sanctification and salvation which God presents to us, treats of the sacraments, of prayer, and of Divine worship.

The first part of these instructions is addressed more especially to

the intellect; the second to the heart; and the third to the emotions: that is to say, to the soul in all its relations with the world around us.

An explanation of the Credo, or the Apostles' Creed, constitutes the first part; an explanation of the Commandments of God and the Church constitutes the second; an explanation of the Seven Sacraments, the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, and religious ceremonies constitute the third.

Let us then listen with attention, and reap as much advantage as we can.

I BELIEVE.

RELIGION, we have said, is the sacred bond by which God is united to us and we are united to God; and that as there is but one true God, so there is but one true religion, which is the Christian religion. We have added that its teaching may be divided into three parts, namely: 1. the truths that we must believe because God has revealed them to us; 2, the duties we must practise because God has imposed them upon us; 3, the means of sanctification and salvation that we must employ because God has offered them to us.

The truths that God proposes to us to be believed are contained and summed up in a kind of prayer or formula of faith called the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles of Jesus Christ composed it at Jerusalem, before they dispersed to spread throughout the world the light of the Gospel.

Doubtless, you know, dear reader, this Apostles' Creed or Credo. Still, on the chance that you may have partly forgotten it, allow me to recite it with you:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."

Let us explain the first word: I believe, *Credo*. To believe is to admit anything upon the testimony of another. When an honest man speaks to us, we believe him, do we not, because we have con-

fidence in his word? If we believe an honest man, how much more must we believe God, who has deigned to reveal Himself to us through patriarchs and prophets, and then by His only Son Jesus Christ, Founder of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, to which He entrusted the charge of religion, with the promise of His divine assistance even to the end of the world.

We accept the teaching of God, which the Church proposes through Faith. Without it we could have no knowledge of God, and it is the necessary foundation of the whole fabric of our religion.

Faith is that holy disposition of the soul which enables us to receive with docility the light of God and the teaching of His Church, and to receive it moreover from a supremely rational motive, because God is truth itself, and His Church guided by Him can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Faith teaches us mysteries, that is to say, truths which we can know but cannot understand. Nevertheless we are perfectly rational in believing these mysteries, because we know that the voice which teaches them is truth itself.

Just as a child is rational when he believes the word of the kind mother who directs his inexperience, even so we Christians are supremely rational when we listen with docility to the rightful pastors of the Church, sent by God to make known to us His laws, to teach us how we may truly serve Him and eternally save our souls.

Further we shall see how the only rightful pastors of the faithful are the Pope and the Catholic Bishops, successors of St. Peter and the Apostles.

Let us then stir up our faith, and utter with a greater earnestness and a still stronger conviction the great word which leads us to God: *Credo!*

Yes, I believe what our fathers believed, what the holy Apostles and the martyrs believed, and what so many great minds and learned men have since believed. I believe in this divine religion which has changed the face of the earth, which has civilized the world, which has constituted all modern societies, which is the sole support and safeguard of nations and of empires! I desire to live and to die in this holy faith, to find in it my consolation in all grief and trouble, to learn from it to be good and virtuous; and when breathing my last and about to appear before God, that my last thought and my supreme hope may be still an act of faith! *Credo!*

WHETHER WE MUST BELIEVE WHAT WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

PÈRE LACORDAIRE was dining one day at a *table d'hôte* in a provincial town of France. Every one knows that Père Lacordaire was a celebrated preacher, a religious of the Order of Dominicans, and renowned for his great talent and brilliant intellect.

At a *table d'hôte* there is a great medley of guests—an indiscriminate gathering of young and old, dull and intelligent. The priest was taking his modest repast in silence; not far from him, a certain commercial traveller was dining and declaiming, well satisfied with himself, and entirely wanting in that proper reserve which is the effect of a good education. It was on Friday, a day of abstinence, and therefore a fertile occasion for commercial travellers dining at a *table d'hôte* to show openly that they are quite superior to what they term ancient prejudices.

After indulging in many witticisms against abstinence, bigotry, superstition, etc., this great talker, observing the unknown religious by a sidelong glance, grew impatient that his words appeared to produce so little effect upon him, and addressed him pointedly as he passed him a dish of omelets from which he had taken much more than his share. "For my part, monsieur," he said sneeringly, "I make it a rule not to believe what I cannot understand . . . is not that reasonable?" "Monsieur," answered Père Lacordaire politely, as he helped himself to the remnant of the omelet which his questioner had been willing to leave to him, "do you understand how it is that the fire which makes iron and lead soft has made these eggs hard?"

"Upon my word, I know nothing about it," answered the commercial traveller, puzzled by this singular question.

"Nor I," answered the religious, "but I see with pleasure that that does not prevent you from believing in omelets."

And yourself, reader, could you give me a solution of the problem proposed by Père Lacordaire? Could you tell me why the same fire produces upon iron and upon an egg precisely opposite effects? No, certainly not; and no man on earth, from the most humble of scullions to the most scholarly of savants, can explain it. Yet nevertheless, scholars and scullions, all the world believes in omelets.

Remember this witty repartee when you hear it said, in workshops or elsewhere, that it is not reasonable to believe in the mysteries of

religion because we should not believe what we cannot understand. Nothing is more feeble than this pretension made by ignorant people. Scientific men know by experience that it is necessary to be humble learners, and that there are in nature, as in religion, a crowd of mysteries, facts which it is impossible to doubt, yet which at the same time we cannot understand. We believe them without understanding them.

Have you ever reflected that, in all which concerns yourself, you are surrounded by mysteries which you cannot disbelieve, but which you cannot understand? Do you know how you hear me when I speak to you?

I move my tongue and my lips; I agitate by this a little air, which enters into your ear and strikes a skin which we call the tympanum, and then your mind grasps my thought.

Do you understand how that can be? No; but it is certain that you hear those who speak to you. Every time that you are spoken to a mystery presents itself, namely, an incomprehensible fact in which you thoroughly believe.

What is sight? You see me when I stand before you; can you understand why you see me, or explain why your eyes, which are two little balls, black and dark within, can make known to you what is passing around you, even to a considerable distance? That sight which you use from morning till evening, and in the reality of which you certainly believe, is a profound and an incomprehensible mystery.

I could go on multiplying examples, and bringing home to you the truth of that which I have just declared, namely, that the works of God are full of mysteries. It is most natural that religion should present to us mysteries to believe, since nature itself, which is more within our range, consists of mysteries.

And mark well that the most clever men are not, on this point, more advanced than we. They make very striking experiments, they establish facts better than we can, they know details of which we are ignorant; but of the cause, the wherefore, they know no more than we; the secret belongs to God.

What is heat? What is light? How does wheat grow? How do fruit and flowers spring forth? What is the sun? What are the stars?

God desires to recall to us incessantly, through the mysteries of nature and of religion, that our minds and our whole being depend upon Him, that He is greater than we, and that we must therefore submit ourselves humbly to His word and to His will. This submis-

sion we call a reasonable faith. The man who refused to believe in the mysteries of nature would be a fool; the man who refuses to believe in the mysteries of faith is not only senseless but impious also. Let us be neither one nor the other. Let us believe with our whole heart in the teaching of God through His works, even though we do not always understand it. Let us rejoice that we can thus prove that we recognize Him gladly as our all-wise and all-wonderful Lord. He has Himself told us that there are three Persons in one God; that the second of these Persons, the Son of God, was made man under the name of Jesus Christ; that the Church is the messenger of Jesus Christ to save men; He has told us that there is an eternal heaven and an eternal hell. Let us then believe it as firmly as though we saw it with our eyes; and let us remember the words of Our Lord after His resurrection: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed!"

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

FÉNÉLON, the great and good Archbishop of Cambray, whose name is honored even by the irreligious, was walking one evening with a child confided to his fatherly care.

The heavens glittered with a thousand stars. The horizon showed a faint gleam from the rays of the setting sun. All nature was at rest, beautiful and sublime. The child asking what hour it was, he drew out his watch." "What a beautiful watch, Monseigneur!" said his young pupil; "will you allow me to look at it?" The Archbishop gave it to him, and as the child examined it closely, "It is a very singular thing, my dear Louis," said Fénélon calmly, "that that watch made itself." "Made itself!" repeated the child, looking at his master with a smile. "Yes, entirely alone. A traveller found it in some desert, and it is quite certain that it made itself." "That is impossible!" young Louis answered; "Monseigneur is laughing at me?" "No, my child, I am not laughing at you. What is there impossible in what I have said?" "But, Monseigneur, a watch could never make itself!" "And why?" "Because so much precision is needed in the arrangement of the thousand little wheels which cause its motion and make the hands keep time that it requires great intelligence to organize it; and even then, very few men really succeed in spite of all their pains. That such a thing could make itself is absolutely impossible; I shall never believe it; you have been deceived, Monseigneur."

Fénélon embraced the child, and pointing out to him the starlit heavens above their heads, he asked: "What will you say then, my dear Louis, of those who pretend that all the wondrous heavens have not only made themselves, but preserve themselves in an unbroken order, and that there is no God?" "Are there truly men so foolish and so wicked as to say that?" asked Louis. "Yes, dear child, there are those who say it; few in number, thank God." "But are there any who believe it?" "I can scarcely credit that there are, considering how entirely they must do violence to their reason, their heart, their instinct, and their good sense, before they can maintain such an opinion. If it be evident that a watch cannot make itself, is it not far more evident of man himself, by whom watches are made? There was a first man, for all things have their beginnings, and this beginning is universally attested by the history of the human race. It is certain, then, that some one made the first man. This some one is that Being who made all beings, who has Himself been made by no one, and whom we call God. He is infinite, for there is no limit to His being; He is eternal, that is to say, infinite in duration, without beginning and without end; almighty, just, good, holy, perfect, and infinite in all His perfections. He is everywhere and invisible, and no one can fathom His marvels. It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being. He is our first principle and our last end; and true happiness, both in this world and the next, is to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him."

Such was the beautiful lesson that the illustrious Archbishop of Cambray gave to his little companion. He gives it to us also, and we may profit by it to remark once again on the foolishness of those miserable men who dare to doubt the existence of God.

The man who says there is no God is obliged in the same breath to say: "All men in all ages and in all countries have been wrong, and I alone am superior in intellect to all of them." In other words, "I have no common sense;" for common sense is nothing else but the common and universal sentiment of the whole world.

A man who doubts the existence of God is therefore a man who has no common sense.

He is a man utterly void of right understanding. How, for instance, would he solve the plain and simple problem proposed by Fénélon? But it is more the heart than the mind that is sick among irreligious men of this stamp.

They are almost always either men destitute of morality, or men who, having superficially adopted the spirit of dangerous books, have

given up their religious Belief, and, having accepted doubtful assumptions against the Faith, imagine that they have strong minds. For such as these one must have strong pity.

Real, steadfast, unshaken atheism is only to be found among animals. When man desires to live like the animals, he may well ape for a time their absence of religion.

How many have been atheists in words, and have suddenly changed when they have stood face to face with death!

A celebrated anatomist has said: "Give me the tongue of a dead dog, and I will make it howl at atheists." "Give me," one might add, "the tongue of an atheist, and I will prove to its owner, by an analysis of the wonders it presents, that he is himself either a madman or a liar."

The surest way to believe in God is so to live that we do not fear His righteous judgments; and to live thus is to practise with care all that religion teaches—to be a good and faithful Catholic.

GOD.

THE first of the truths contained in the Apostles' Creed relates to the existence and the nature of God, our Creator and our Sovereign Master. We shall not insist here upon the existence of this great God—a truth so evident that all people in all ages have unanimously recognized it, notwithstanding human passions, errors, and the prejudices created by false religions. Reason and Faith agree upon this point, and there cannot be upon earth a veritable atheist.

There is one God, Creator of the world, by whom all things were made, and who Himself was made by none, a Being infinite in His essence and in all His ineffable perfections, infinite in His goodness, in His wisdom, in His almighty power; infinite in knowledge and in justice; a pure Spirit who cannot be seen by the physical sight, but by the inward light of intelligence; whom we cannot hear with our ears, but who speaks to our hearts; whom we cannot touch with our hands, but to whom we may unite ourselves by love. God is truth, life, holiness, perfection, beauty, and infinite goodness. All that His creatures possess that is good, great, or noble, is but a pale reflection of His goodness, His beauty, and His glory. He is the first principle and the end of all things, most especially of man, who is His adopted son, His living temple, created to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to possess Him eternally in the next.

Such is the grand and sublime belief that the Christian faith gives us. No philosopher has ever conceived anything similar to it, and it has been necessary for God to reveal Himself to us by His prophets, and by Jesus Christ, His only Son, in order to initiate us into the secrets of His being. He has likewise taught us, and we therefore firmly believe, that there are in Him three Persons, essentially distinct and inseparable, equal in all things, having the same infinite and divine nature, the same adorable perfections, being one and the same God. These three Persons are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is God; the Son is God even as the Father; the Holy Ghost is God even as the Father and the Son; and these three Persons are one God, and not three Gods; one Lord, and not three Lords; one Eternal, and not three Eternals. The Father is invisible, also the Son, also the Holy Ghost. "No one has seen God at any time," says the Gospel, "but His only Son Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who has made Him known unto the world." The Father eternally begets the Son, who is wisdom, truth, and light; from the Father and the Son proceeds eternally the Holy Ghost, who is love and life, the ineffable union of the Father and the Son. Such is the mystery of the divine nature of one God in three Persons, which is called by faith the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity. The Father does all things by His Son through His Holy Spirit, by His wisdom in His love. It is thus that He created the heaven and the earth, by His Son Jesus Christ; and in His holy love all that exists exists only through God, and rests in Him alone. With the first creature commenced the centuries in the midst of which we live, and out of which we pass to enter into the eternity of God. There are two kinds of creatures—the reasonable, whom God has destined to possess Him in this world and for all eternity; and those without reason, destined to serve others. Creatures gifted with intelligence are angels and men, pure spirits and spirits united to bodies; creatures without reason are animals, plants, and the rest of creation.

Man, who resembles angels in his soul and material creatures in his body, is the king of the world, with Jesus Christ, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, God-made Man.

Among the angels, some were faithful to God, and are happy others revolted through pride, and are damned eternally. The good angels accompany man, and sustain him in the path of right; the wicked angels, whom we call evil spirits or devils, desire to make him join in their revolt and condemnation, by causing him to fall into sin. The first man, Adam, the father of all, succumbed to

temptation, and incurred, both for himself and his children, the chastisement of sin. We shall see further how God deigned to retrieve this great fall, and how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man, came to expiate the sin of Adam, and to restore life, spiritual and eternal, to the work of His own hands.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

PROVIDENCE is that care which God takes of all His creatures, and especially of His intelligent creature, man.

Those who say that God does not trouble Himself about us are thoughtless, not to say absurd; for it is impossible to conceive the idea of God without Providence.

It is impossible that the Almighty God, knowing and seeing all things, should abdicate His sovereign empire over His creatures, and that after having made them, He should cease to govern them. It is impossible that God, holy and just, necessarily desiring good and detesting evil, should remain indifferent to our actions, good and wicked. This is the whole meaning of Providence. God does for us what the father of a family does for his children: He watches over us; He teaches us what is good and what is evil; He shows us the right path which we must follow, and the wrong one which we must avoid; He punishes us when we disobey Him, and rewards us when we do His holy will. What, I ask, could be more simple or natural than this? When we doubt the divine Providence, it is from ignorance, or rather forgetfulness, of two or three great truths, without which the world would be an undecipherable enigma.

The first of these truths is, that under the operations of God we remain free to do good or evil. God does not govern us as He governs the material world, the stars, the elements, and animals. He treats us as reasonable creatures, capable of freely accepting and acquiring the treasure of happiness. He neglects nothing to make us choose the right: instructions, warnings, tender invitations, terrible threats; He spares nothing. He overwhelms us with His graces; He surrounds us with help; but He does not force us; to do that would be to destroy His own work. He respects in us the gifts that He has given us.

The second truth, often forgotten, is that this present life is but a preparation for that eternal life which awaits us beyond the grave.

The third, that we are no longer in that pure and perfect state in which God created us, but in a state of moral disorder, and thence

forth of expiation, by reason of sin. The grace of God has been, it is true, restored to us by Jesus Christ our Redeemer, but in such a manner that divine justice must still exercise its imprescriptible rights.

Whoever keeps these three fundamental truths of Christianity before his eyes will find that all difficulties with regard to Providence immediately disappear. The world, life, everything appears in a different light. Happiness is no longer, for the Christian, what men of the world call by that name—pleasure, wealth, and worldly glory. Happiness is anything that may most perfectly prepare him for that infinite, ineffable, and eternal blessedness for which this life is only a short preparation; and from that time he understands why Jesus Christ has said in the Gospel: “Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that weep, blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’s sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Evil becomes an equally different thing; and, when asking God each day to deliver him from evil, the Christian only asks to be delivered from all that could deprive him of that eternal happiness which is the only real, pure, and unchangeable good. Suffering, tears, and the thousand troubles of this life are for him henceforth but the just punishment of sin. Religion teaches him that these inevitable trials are but transient afflictions, designed by his loving Father in heaven to prove his fidelity, to purify him from his faults, to render him more like his crucified Saviour, and to cause him to merit a still greater happiness in his eternal home. By the help of religion he bears them with patience, sometimes even with joy, and loves the Fatherly hand which only strikes to save.

Be a Christian, and you will comprehend Providence. If you are not a Christian, you can understand nothing that relates to God, to man, to human life, to all that surrounds you. If sometimes, among your trials and delusions, there arise in your heart some murmur, some doubt of God’s providence; if you are tempted to ask why there are so many irregularities of condition in this present life; why this man is born poor, and that one rich; why so much trouble and affliction for some, and so much prosperity for others; why this man should be in such a place, and yourself in another; why the rigor of the seasons; why the privations of poverty; why this want of fortune, of health, when health and fortune would be so beneficial to you; why this guilty man should go unpunished, and this righteous man be overwhelmed by trouble; why the beneficent man should be taken away by death, while the wicked man remains—

remember eternity, think of Jesus Christ crucified: there lies the solution of the problem!

God is patient because He is eternal. He rewards by the fleeting prosperity of the world the little good which may be done by this wicked man, this great sinner, who shall reap in a terrible eternity the punishment he deserves. And, as regards the righteous accounted by the world unfortunate, God is causing them to expiate by short affliction those faults which are inseparable from human weakness, while He prepares for them an eternal crown by which their virtue shall be everlastingly rewarded. Eternity is the justification of divine Providence. It is by the measure of eternity that we must judge all that happens to us in this world. In any other way it is, we repeat, impossible that we should understand any of the designs of God. All that God does is well done, and if He permit evil, it is always for the sake of a greater good.

AN ANECDOTE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

A POOR woman received formerly a double portion of food every day from a religious house. This consisted of a dinner for herself and her aged husband, a cobbler by trade, but who was at that time without employment.

Poor from her childhood, she had learned by a painful experience to pity the poor; she had compassion for the miseries of hunger and the pangs of destitution because she had known them herself. She lived in a wretched cottage, where, notwithstanding her own distress, she gladly welcomed those who were still poorer than herself, and often found means of helping them. Among the number was a poor orphan child eight years old, to whom she always gave a portion of her scanty repast. One day as she returned home with her usual basket of food, he was watching for her at the door. "I am so hungry, mother," he cried when he saw her coming; "do give me something to eat; I have not had anything to-day." "Here, my child," she answered, "eat at once, but leave me a little, for I too have had no breakfast to-day." He began eating so eagerly, she had not the heart to interrupt him, and the dinner rapidly disappeared. When it was all gone, the child flung his arms affectionately round his kind friend, kissed her and thanked her, and went away singing. The good woman standing at her door watched him till he was out of sight. "And my dinner too," she thought, "is gone, and what will my poor husband say? what can I give him?"

As she was indulging in these sad reflections, her attention was attracted by a little white dog running rapidly toward her, followed closely by a large mastiff. The puppy held in its mouth something almost as large as itself, which, as it came nearer, she saw to be an enormous slice of bread. It ran straight up to the poor woman, put the bread down at her feet without touching it, and escaped in another direction. The large dog stopped some little distance off. Stupefied, the good woman picked up the bread; lying upon it there was also a large slice of meat, enough to make a good repast! She returned to the house.

"Oh, my God!" she cried, falling on her knees, and shedding tears of joy, "in this way Thou dost restore to me the dinner of which I had deprived myself for Thy sake!" This was the dinner of Providence! No dinner had ever been eaten in that pious household with so good an appetite, and the poor woman might have been heard singing merrily all that evening, so light-hearted did she feel at this mark of God's protection!

THE DEVIL.

THE Catholic Faith teaches that a spirit exists whom we call the devil or the demon, and who exerts his power for evil in the world, to try the fidelity of Christians and to punish the sins of men. One would be a heretic who dared to deny this point of Christian doctrine, and to pretend that the devil is not a living, personal being. Just as we ourselves consist of two constituent principles, the one spiritual and invisible, which is the soul, the other material and visible, which is the body; even so the world consists of two orders of creatures: the spiritual and invisible, who are spirits; the material and visible, who are bodies. Our soul is that power which animates and gives action to our body; spirits, although in a different manner, do also constitute a hidden force, and are therefore able to influence material bodies, and to communicate to them certain qualities, certain developments, and different impulses. Among these spirits, whose number is incalculable, there are many who are in rebellion against God, who are engaged in contest with the good spirits, and are endeavoring by all possible means to bring disorder into the world, and to disturb its harmony.

The faithful spirits are called angels, that is, messengers of God; the rebellious spirits are called demons, from a Greek word which

signifies evil spirit; or rather devils, from another Greek word, which signifies adversary, enemy, disturber.

The most powerful of the good angels is called by the Church the Archangel Saint Michael, which name signifies, None is like to God; the chief of the wicked spirits is called Lucifer, which means Light-bearer, because it is the vocation of this spirit to preside over light; and also Satan, which means the Rebel. He is commonly called the devil (although there are many others), because he is the head and representative of them all.

The devil is our personal enemy, because, created in the image of Jesus Christ, we are destined to be, both on earth and in heaven, the children of that God whose holy authority Satan rejects.

He attacks us in all manner of ways, and tries especially to make us sin, so that, separated from Jesus Christ, we may lose the happiness of heaven.

The devil tempts us either directly or indirectly; directly, by suggesting to us thoughts of pride, guilty desires, wicked and perverse inclinations, by turning us away from prayer, from Holy Communion, from the service of God, and from good works; indirectly, by means of what the Gospel calls "the world," sinful examples, the corrupting influences of bad society and sinful pleasures. Thus Satan labors incessantly, either personally or by means of sinners who are his servants, to bring us to ruin.

Let us guard against temptations. The enemy is powerful and subtle; let us be stronger and more active than he. If we are faithful to prayer, to frequent Communion, to good reading, if we avoid all dangerous occasions, we have nothing to fear, and our Saviour, who dwells within us, will speak to our hearts and say, as He said to His first disciples: "Have confidence; I have overcome the world. Abide in me, and I in you." If, on the contrary, we live habitually in religious indifference, if we neglect prayer and the Sacraments, if pernicious literature furnish us with food for thought, if we do not fly from dangerous occasions, our ruin is certain. God has Himself declared it: "He who despises small things shall fall little by little. He who loves danger shall perish in it." What power has an unarmed man against a terrible lion? St. Peter says to all Christians: "Be sober and watch; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist ye, strong in faith." Satan is therefore the instigator of all sin. God, being in truth infinite goodness, cannot be in any sense the author of evil; and one of the most perfidious artifices of Satan is to

tempt us to assume the reverse, and to become irritated against God when we suffer, as if it were God who was doing us harm. The Holy Scripture shows us clearly the disastrous influence that the devil has over us in the well-known history of Job. Hordes of robbers carried off in one day all the flocks and possessions of this holy man; a violent wind came from the desert and overthrew the house in which his children lived, depriving him thus of all his family; a frightful sickness struck him, covering him with a grievous leprosy, burning his blood and withering his bones; lastly, poverty overwhelmed him with its horrible privations, and he took refuge on a dunghill, where his friends, and even his wife, came to insult him, and to persuade him to curse God.

What was the real secret cause of all these evils? God teaches us Himself: it was Satan, it was the devil, who obtained from the Lord permission to try Job.

But God, who brings good out of evil, makes use of the wickedness of Lucifer and the rebellious angels to sanctify His servants. Devils, like men, have then the power to do evil; but God makes use of the wickedness of Satan and the other devils to make us expiate our sins by many different trials, and also to cause us to practise very excellent virtues, which prepare for us in heaven an incomparable increase of happiness. One of the greatest misfortunes of the age is that, in practice at least, people believe no longer in the devil. And thus he sports with victims who desire to believe no longer in the existence of their tormentor.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE devil has no adversary more formidable than the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Saviour, and Queen of the Church.

An error sufficiently common in these days is to regard devotion to the Blessed Virgin as among those religious practices which are undoubtedly good, but not essential to Christianity. This indifference toward the Mother of God proceeds from an indifference very common and still more deplorable—an indifference, alas! to the Son of God Himself, even our Lord Jesus Christ; and this does not usually arise from wickedness or evil intentions, but simply from ignorance.

The Christian religion is the knowledge, love, and service of God, taught to men by Jesus Christ, God made man; and Jesus Christ is man only through the agency of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is

thus the way by which God came down to us. The Son of God has, then, a Father, who is the almighty, infinite, and unapproachable God; also a Mother, who is Mary, the highest, the holiest of creatures. In order for God to become Jesus, that is to say, our Saviour and our Brother, Mary was, by the divine decrees, as necessary as the Eternal Father; and in the sacred mystery of the Incarnation, the foundation of all Christianity, it is impossible to separate these three names—God, Jesus, Mary.

Even as Jesus Christ has come to us through His holy Mother, it is through her that we must go to Him. Jesus may be compared to a fragrant flower: His divinity, invisible and entirely spiritual, is the perfume of the flower; His humanity, visible and entirely penetrated by divinity, is the flower itself; and the stem which supports the flower and has produced it is the Virgin Mary. If you desire to have the perfume you must necessarily have the flower, and you cannot take the flower but by the stem which bears it. Thus to reach God it is absolutely necessary to be a Christian, namely, to know and to serve Jesus Christ; and to be a Christian, you must love the Blessed Virgin and give to her the honor that she merits.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, of which we are all the members. From this divine Head flow the life and strength which animate the members; the necessary channel through which the Church receives all that is given to her by God is the Blessed Virgin.

It is easy to understand how Protestant sects, which reject the Blessed Virgin, do at the same time unintentionally and unconsciously reject our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But we, being Catholics, continue in the truth; one might add that we continue by this means in love, and in the most consoling confidence. What can we fear? We have not only a God who has made Himself our Brother and our Redeemer, but this Redeemer, whose divine Majesty we might have still feared by reason of our sins, gives to us a mediatrix between Himself and us, the sweet and most merciful Virgin Mary His Mother, a simple creature like ourselves, and who, having all manner of justice to exercise against sinners, can only inspire them with confidence and hope. Therefore, if we have recourse to Mary we need never be discouraged, and, great sinners though we may be, at the moment we sincerely repent we feel assured that we shall be favorably received by our Father and our Judge, to whose feet our dear Mother leads us. How often, in the lifetime of a family, it has happened that a mother has obtained from a justly angry father the pardon of a guilty child! The Church is the great family of the

children of God; and the Blessed Virgin was constituted upon Calvary Mother and Protectress of the Church as well as of each of its members.

Let us be Christians, and render to the Mother of God the homage that is due to her; let us never pronounce but with reverence her sacred name; let us often salute her by one of those beautiful prayers with which the Holy Spirit has inspired the Church, and of which the most wonderful is also the simplest. You have known it from your childhood: it is the Hail Mary, that sweet and heavenly prayer first uttered by the Angel Gabriel upon the day of the Annunciation.

Let us always wear some sign of our devotion toward Mary, the medal or the scapular of the Immaculate Conception. Let us endeavor to keep in our room a statue or a picture of the Blessed Virgin; and when our heart is oppressed by sadness, when the trials of life weigh too heavily upon us, when temptations assail us with greater violence, let us turn our eyes to the image of our Protectress, and entreat the omnipotent Queen of Heaven never to abandon us, and to shed upon us the blessings of her Divine Son.

Thus Mary will always preserve us in the service of Jesus Christ, which is no other than the service of God.

MARY IMMACULATE.

On the 8th of December, 1854, the city of Rome witnessed one of the greatest religious acts which has ever stirred the hearts of Christians since the foundation of the Church. The supreme Head of Religion, the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar and representative of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, defined as an article of faith the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Let us meditate for a moment on this memorable event, and on the glorious mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX., was the two hundred and fifty-eighth successor of St. Peter, chief of the Apostles and the first Pope. Pius IX., like all the Pontiffs his predecessors, and like St. Peter himself, is the Vicar of Jesus Christ, His visible representative among us. He is the spiritual head of all Bishops, of all Priests, of all Christians; he is commissioned by God to govern the Church, to teach it all that must be believed and to lead it in the way of salvation. The Pope is a man like to ourselves; nevertheless, when we obey him, and when we surround him with reverence and love, it is God Himself whom we obey, it is the authority of God that we

reverence and love, because, man though he be, he is invested with spiritual power from Our Lord. When the Pope teaches, it is Jesus Christ who teaches; when the Pope commands or forbids, it is Jesus Christ who commands or forbids.

In 1854 the Pope Pius IX. judged, in his wisdom, that the time was come to render to the Blessed Virgin Mary the most brilliant homage that she has ever received from Christians. Consequently, after having long communed with God in prayer, after having desired the prayers of the whole Catholic Church, after having interrogated all the bishops in the world, he convoked at Rome, for the 8th of December, the Feast of the Conception of Mary, all those bishops whom the care of their flocks left free to respond to his call.

A hundred and ninety-six cardinals, archbishops, and bishops assembled to surround the Sovereign Pontiff in this great solemnity, and to bear witness of the faith of their dioceses and their countries.

Everything favored this glorious *fête*. The weather was as calm and clear as in the most beautiful days of spring.

All the streets and houses of Rome were decorated with flags, and the immense Basilica of St. Peter's threw open its gates from the early dawn to an innumerable concourse of the faithful, who had hastened from the four quarters of the world. The French army, which had maintained a garrison at Rome since 1849 for the defence of the temporal sovereignty of the Pope, was drawn up in grand array in the space around St. Peter's.

Toward nine o'clock the Sovereign Pontiff left the Palace of the Vatican, preceded by a long file of prelates, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals in their richest vestments, walking two and two, while reciting the Litanies of the Saints.

Among their number were twenty-one bishops of France, including the poor Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Sibour, who afterward perished by the sacrilegious hand of a furious enemy of the Blessed Virgin. Many Eastern patriarchs and bishops might have been distinguished by the particular shape of their mitres and their sacerdotal vestments.

The Holy Father, clad in an immense white cope embroidered with gold, and crowned with the sacred tiara, was carried, according to custom, on his throne, sheltered by a floating canopy of silk and gold, and scattered the divine benediction over the reverent kneeling crowd.

The Pope himself celebrated the holy mass. A magnificent chalice of massive gold, resplendent with diamonds, had been prepared for



ST. ANNE.

The mother of the Blessed Virgin was signally favored by God in being chosen to give to a lost world the Advocate of Mercy. But it was a greater happiness to be, under God, the greatest instrument of her virtue, and to be spiritually her mother by a holy education in perfect innocence and sanctity. Her pious care remains a lesson to Christian parents for all time.



THE ANNUNCIATION.

To the heavenly greeting, "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women," Our Lady, as the divine decree was revealed to her, answered in the depth of her humility and obedience : "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Thus the greatest of all mysteries was accomplished, and the prophecy fulfilled, "For henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

the offering of the holy sacrifice. After the gospel, the Pope took his place upon a raised throne at the extremity of the Basilica and in front of the altar. The cardinals and bishops were ranged on his right and left, wearing their white mitres and rich vestments of cloth-of-silver embossed with gold. The oldest of the cardinals and the oldest of the bishops, accompanied by the Catholic Patriarch of the Greek Church, approaching, knelt at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, asking him, in the name of the Holy Catholic Church, to be willing to decree as a dogma of faith that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord, Our Creator, and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, had been exempted from the universal stain of original sin, and that she was consequently immaculate in her conception. The Pope rose.

A deep emotion filled the whole assembly. He intoned the *Veni Creator*, to ask for the last time the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit; then, in the midst of a silence so profound that all the faithful could distinctly hear his voice, he read the decree of faith:

“By the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own, we declare and define that the Blessed Virgin Mary has been, from the first moment of her conception, preserved from all stain of original sin, and that this doctrine is revealed by God. If any dare to think otherwise, let him know that he is condemned, and that he has departed from the Catholic Faith.”

Such was the sense of the pontifical decree. The Holy Father was so deeply moved that he could scarcely command his voice, and was often obliged to pause. All eyes were filled with tears, and even those who had come, attracted by curiosity, to witness so grand a ceremonial, were won, in spite of themselves, by the display of such powerful Christian emotion.

The whole world responded by a prolonged acclamation of joy and gratitude to the infallible voice of the successor of St. Peter. The glory of Mary was universally celebrated; and for more than six months the religious journals were filled with descriptions of continual rejoicings. Many towns in France, Germany, and elsewhere were solemnly consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin. Commemorative statues were everywhere erected, and in France a national subscription was set on foot with the purpose of erecting in the centre of the country, on the summit of the rock which rises above the town of Puy, a colossal statue of Mary Immaculate, for which purpose the Emperor gave all the necessary metal from the Russian cannon taken at Sebastopol.

It is not by such means as these that *we* can show devotion to the Mother of God; but let us try with our whole heart to prove it, in every way we can. We will always keep her image in our rooms, and let it be more precious to us than anything except the crucifix. We will always wear a medal representing Mary, conceived without sin; and we will never allow a day to pass without entreating the help of our powerful Protectress and most merciful Mother. Let us love the Blessed Virgin as Jesus loved her first. Yet this will be no easy task, for we can never love her, can never honor her, so much as He did. Let us imitate the sanctity of our dear Mother, her purity, her humility, her sweetness, her life of laborious poverty, her faithfulness in little things; but more than all, let us imitate her intense and unutterable love for Jesus, and let us so live that when our race is run she shall know us for her children, and conduct us to an eternal rest in the glorious paradise of the redeemed.

THE ANNUNCIATION AND THE INCARNATION.

ON a certain 25th of March, 4,004 years after the creation of Adam and Eve, 2,957 years after the Deluge, 1,510 years since Moses delivered the people of God, 1,032 years after the consecration of the royalty of David, 752 years after the foundation of Rome, and on the anniversary of the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, the Lord God, Almighty and All-merciful, sent the Archangel Gabriel to a virgin of the name of Mary, living in the little town of Nazareth in Galilee, to announce to her the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Mary was then about fourteen, and was betrothed to Joseph, her near relation, descended like herself from the royal race of David, and of the tribe of Juda. Immaculate and purer than the angels, sweet and full of humility, the Blessed Virgin awaited, with the whole of Israel, the coming of the Divine Redeemer announced from the foundation of the world. She knew not that she was destined to be the Mother of the King of Heaven; and in her loving humility she prayed that she might even be the handmaid of her who should be blessed among women.

According to ancient tradition it was at noonday, on the 25th of March, that the Archangel Gabriel, clothed in human form and radiant with the light of heaven, appeared to Mary, who was praying at the time in a grotto hewn from the solid rock of the hill at the foot of which her house was built, as were all the houses of Naza-

reth. This grotto has been converted into a chapel, and may be seen, and is still venerated, in the village of Nazareth.

The holy house of Mary and Joseph, which formed the front of this grotto, was miraculously transported, by the command of God, to Loreto in Italy, in the year 1291, and pilgrims of the whole world may kneel beneath the shadow of those walls which for thirty years were sanctified by the presence of the Incarnate Word, of the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph.

"Hail, full of grace!" said the Archangel with deep reverence, "the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." At the sight of the angel, and at this unlooked-for salutation, the Virgin was troubled, and asked herself what it could mean. "Fear not, Mary," said the heavenly messenger, "for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus (that is to say, Saviour). He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

In her childhood Mary had taken the vow of perpetual virginity; Joseph also was bound by this vow; and if Mary had consented to marry him, it was only that she might have a protector of her youth and innocence, and a sure guide in the path of holiness. When the Archangel Gabriel announced to her that she was destined to become a mother, Mary, fearful for the glory of her holy virginity, asked immediately how that was possible, since she was forever consecrated to God.

Then the angel, explaining to her the designs of God, reassured her, and declared to her that this maternity, as much above all other maternities as the heavens are above the earth, should be a miracle beyond all miracles, and should cast no shadow on her perfect purity. "The Holy Ghost," he said, "shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And as a sign that God was working wonders above all human reason, Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin the miraculous conception of St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the adorable Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, of whom she should herself become the mother. "Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren. Because no word shall be impossible with God."

Then the most Holy Virgin, completely annihilating herself before the adorable will of God, became possessed of an unutterable joy, and of a love more intense than the love of cherubims and seraphims; and thus she gave her definite consent to the divine proposition, and lifting up her heart to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, answered in the words which have been the world's salvation: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word." And at that very instant the Eternal Word, equal in all things to the Father and the Holy Spirit, the living God, Creator of all that exists, King and Lord of men, Ruler of heaven and earth, became incarnate in the womb of Mary, since He formed for Himself a body from the very substance of the body of the Blessed Virgin, created a soul which He united to this body; and thus united His own divine and eternal person to this soul and to this body in the womb of Mary, that GOD became truly *man*, truly the son of Mary, while she became truly His mother, truly the Mother of God.

The Blessed Virgin is indeed the mother of Him who is both God and man, true God and true man, and who unites within Himself, in an indivisible manner, the divine and human nature. This title and this glory of being MOTHER OF GOD surpasses all that God has ever done, or ever could do, for a simple creature. By this name alone the Virgin Mary is raised incalculably above all saints, all angels and archangels and celestial powers, above all cherubim and seraphim, who are only, after all, the servants of that God of whom MARY is the mother. By virtue of her divine maternity, Mary has become the Queen of Heaven, the Queen of the Church, the Queen of saints, the Queen of the whole world. Let us, therefore, like the Angel Gabriel, salute her every day with mingled love and reverence; for thus the faithful upon earth may unite themselves to the faithful in heaven, saying, with heartfelt devotion, to their Mother and their well-beloved Queen: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

Every year, on the 25th of March, the Church celebrates the anniversary of that day, forever blessed, on which the Holy Virgin consented to the mystery of the Incarnation, and gave to the world its Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

BETHLEHEM AND THE CHILD JESUS.

FROM the hour of the Annunciation, Mary bore within her sacred womb our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. A living ciborium, Mary contained and bore among men the body and the blood, the soul and the divinity, of the Saviour. She enclosed the whole world, the God of heaven, He whom seraphims and angels continually adore!

Nine months after, on the 24th of December, Joseph and Mary reached the little town of Bethlehem, the city of David, there to be enrolled, according to the decree of Cæsar Augustus, who then commanded the whole world.

The divine prophecies were thus unconsciously fulfilled by Augustus, and it was an unquestioned fact among the Jews that the Christ, the Messias, should be born at Bethlehem and descended from King David. On arriving at Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary found that there was no room for them in the inn; the night was approaching, and they found themselves obliged to go out of the town and to seek shelter in a grotto, which for many centuries had been a place of refuge for shepherds and their flocks. According to ancient religious traditions, David, Abraham, and Noe had frequently sought an asylum in this grotto, and at the very beginning of the human race Seth, the son of Adam, who had filled the place of Abel, had taken refuge there to pray.

Toward midnight the Blessed Virgin was warned by God that the moment was come in which the Word Incarnate should appear to the eyes of His creatures. Then she clothed herself in the white raiment she had brought for that hour, and prepared, with St. Joseph, a little hay and straw in a manger, and the swaddling-clothes upon the straw. There Mary, kneeling, lifted up her arms to heaven, and became absorbed in a blissful ecstasy—all holy and divine she knelt, the Virgin Mother of God.

A heavenly light enveloped her, and suddenly in the midst of this light there appeared to her enraptured vision the holy infant Jesus, all radiant with glory; He looked at her with love, and stretched out His little arms. Then Mary, full of joy, adored Him as her God, and, taking Him in her arms, she held Him to her heart, and covered Him with tears and kisses. Then she wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes and laid Him in the manger; Joseph on one side and Mary on the other, kneeling and prostrate before the Lord, were as the two

cherubim of gold before the ark of the alliance; they were the first to adore God made man, and they adored Him in the name of heaven and earth, with one faith, one love, and an unutterable fervor.

At the very same hour a great miracle took place in a neighboring field, where shepherds were watching their flocks during the silence of the night. An ancient tradition relates that there were three; an old man, a young man, and a child. A bright light suddenly shone round them, and an angel of the Lord stood by them: "Behold," he said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people: For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will. Then the shepherds, being struck with amazement, said one to another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us." And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger. Then they adored Him, received His first benedictions, and returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God. Thus the child Jesus chose from among the poor His first worshippers and earliest disciples. Having Himself become poor for love of us, Our Lord makes choice of the poor before the rich, and gives to them this consolation among all the troubles and privations by which they are overwhelmed.

Nevertheless, a little time after, the rich, and wise, and noble were admitted in their turn to adore the holy Child of Bethlehem. They were called Magi, and came from the East. A star, a miraculous light, warned them of the birth of the Saviour, and they immediately departed, carrying with them rich gifts, until they also arrived at Bethlehem; then, their earnest faith piercing the veil which hid from their eyes the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, they prostrated themselves at His feet, adored Him as their God, and offered to Him gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Rich and poor, we are each and all of us called upon thus to believe in and adore the infant Jesus; the little Child in the manger at Bethlehem is verily our God, the one true, living, and eternal God, who for love of us came down from heaven to earth. Not content with abasing His infinite Majesty to the very level of His creatures by becoming their Master and their Brother, He did still more, since He took upon Himself the whole burden of sin by which they had

been eternally lost, and thus all are saved who believe and hope in Jesus Christ, who adore Him, and return Him love for love, and who are obedient in all things to His holy Church; and all who remain faithful unto death are assured of the eternal happiness of heaven. Jesus Christ is the Lord our God, and in His eternal glory He is infinitely worthy of our homage and adoration; but He is also our very tender, very merciful child Saviour, and in His willing abjection He is infinitely worthy of our love.

And what dignity could be greater or more sublime than that of the Blessed Virgin?

Still Mary, like Jesus, merits our love as much as our veneration: she is as good as she is great, as gentle as she is pure, as merciful as she is perfect and holy!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph! names full of blessing and salvation! How happy we are to have so merciful a God, and ever near Him two such powerful intercessors!

Let us live, like Mary and Joseph, quiet, peaceful lives, all filled with love of the child Jesus, who reposes in our hearts as in a second manger, a manger which is often, alas! as cold and comfortless as that of Bethlehem.

Let us, like the shepherds, go with fervor, with love, with gladness, and, above all, with a lively faith, into our churches, where we can always find the Child of Bethlehem hidden and humiliated there, as once within the swaddling-clothes, so now beneath the veils of the Most Holy Eucharist.

The Catholic Church is the thrice-honored Bethlehem which possesses and encloses Jesus Christ, and which by giving Him to faithful hearts consoles all the sorrows of humanity, and saves the world by teaching it to know, to serve, and to love the Saviour.

NAZARETH.

AFTER His birth at Bethlehem the holy child Jesus was carried by His mother and St. Joseph into Egypt, in order to escape the persecution of Herod. He remained there two years and a half, and it is related in the traditions of that country that many great and touching miracles signalized the presence of the Infant God. Among others it is said that a little child was cured of leprosy by being bathed in the water which the Blessed Virgin had used to wash her Divine Son, and that this child, who as he grew up fell into sin, was the penitent thief, saved a second time by Jesus upon Calvary.

When the tyrant Herod was dead, the Holy Family returned to Judea, and went to live at Nazareth in Galilee, in the same house where the annunciation of the Angel Gabriel had taken place, and where the Son of God was first made man within the womb of Mary. There Jesus grew up under the eyes of His mother and His adopted father. There, until the age of thirty, in prayer, in silence, in the most profound humility, in poverty and work, in tears and penance, He prepared the great work of the world's salvation, which He preached for two years and a half before He consummated it upon the Cross, and returned triumphant to His eternal glory.

The hidden life of Our Lord at Nazareth is one of the most instructive and consoling mysteries of Christianity. It is the most direct, efficacious, and powerful remedy for the vanity which incessantly urges us to seek for human glory, to desire worldly praise and approbation, and to fear the gaze of men more than the eye of God. From the poor and simple home at Nazareth, Jesus speaks to each and all, and says: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also." Let us be, then, disciples of Jesus, like our Master, and for love of our Master, meek and humble of heart; let us turn aside from the flattering delusions of self-love; let us each day restrain the pride which renders us arrogant and self-sufficient, which urges us to rebel against the authority of our parents, our priests, and other lawful superiors, which prevents us acknowledging all our sins in confession, and which leads us into all manner of wrong-doing. Let us rather humiliate ourselves constantly and courageously, like our most holy Master, and learn to live unnoticed and unknown, poor and insignificant, in the midst of a world which understands nothing of divine truths, and which cares and seeks for nothing but the soap-bubbles of glory, honor, and riches, dignity, grandeur, and praise.

Until the age of thirty the Son of God was willing to live entirely and constantly subject to Mary and to Joseph. "*Et erat subditus illis*; and He was subject to them." And this is all the Gospel tells us! What a lesson for young men, true scions of this age of progress—who, on their first entrance into life, seem seized with the spirit of insubordination; who imagine that even at fifteen or sixteen years old it is no longer fitting that they should obey either father or mother; and that to confess their sins, to pray, and to go to church, are actions unworthy of a young man! They dream of freedom, independence, and liberty, while their enfeebled minds cannot rise to

any right comprehension of the noble examples which shine forth from that home at Nazareth. They cannot understand that parental and religious authority is the greatest safeguard of youth, and can in no way destroy its happiness. They blush to obey; because they are, they say, "men": as if Jesus were not a man in a most eminent degree, GOD made man; a man, the model of all men! and it was not only until ten or twelve years, it was not only until fifteen or sixteen years of age that Jesus obeyed, and was willing to obey to give us an example, *exemplum dedi vobis*; it was until eighteen, until twenty, until twenty-five, yes, even until thirty years, that He was obedient and "subject." Alas! how few of us, in this present generation, would feel in our right element in that holy simple home at Nazareth! It would be necessary first for our lives to be so transformed that the atmosphere of our Saviour's sacred retreat should be similar to that of our own homes and daily surroundings. The natural atmosphere of a true Christian is humility, obedience, gentleness, and recollection; in one word, it is Jesus Christ Himself; Jesus Christ known (and how few know Him to-day); Jesus Christ loved (and how few love Him truly); Jesus Christ imitated (alas! does not the number of those who imitate Him recall only too forcibly the ten just men of Sodom!).

Mary and Joseph, while commanding their well-beloved Jesus, were guided only by His example, by His words, by His whole life, which was to them the Divine school of perfect sanctity. Eternity alone will reveal to us the ineffable progress made by these two privileged and ever-faithful souls in this school of God! The life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph was a life of peace and love, of perfect simplicity and holiness, of penance, work, and prayer! They gladly accepted all the privations of their severe poverty. . . . Jesus had but one thought—the perfect accomplishment of the will of His Father in Heaven, and of Mary and of Joseph upon earth, since their will was to Him the earthly shadow of that heavenly will: Mary and Joseph lived by His example in incomparable subjection to that heavenly will which Jesus made clear to them. And they all lived from day to day simply intent on doing well all that they did; and the holy Virgin and the holy Joseph, amid the shadows of the purest, most unquestioning faith, adored the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of that long silence of the Word made flesh, the mystery of that hidden life at Nazareth and of those long years which seem to human wisdom time lost in the redemption of the world.

Joseph died happily and peacefully at Nazareth, in the midst of

these luminous shadows, in the arms of Jesus and Mary, tenderly watched and cared for by Him who is "the resurrection and the life." Happy he who falls asleep like Joseph in the love of Jesus and Mary, after a pure and simple life passed in prayer and work, in penance and obscurity. Saint Joseph, we can well understand, is the patron of a happy death.

Let us think of Nazareth when work grows hard and wearisome, when the yoke of a simple, unassuming life becomes galling to our pride, when we are carried away by foolish gusts of worldly vanity, when self-love urges us to seek distinction, and especially when the spirit of independence whispers in our ears the seductive theories of false liberty. . . . O Jesus! save us from these insidious temptations; and help us to comprehend still more clearly the sanctifying mystery of Thy hidden life at Nazareth!

JESUS CHRIST.

WE have seen what faith truly is; we have seen how entirely worthy of God and of ourselves is that idea which Christianity gives us of our Creator, the almighty and eternal Lord, infinite and supreme; one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

But this infinite God would have been utterly unknown to us if He had not, in His love, revealed Himself. This is what He has been doing ever since the commencement of the world, by the ministry of His angels, by the inspiration of patriarchs and prophets, and more than all by the incarnation of His own beloved Son, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary about forty centuries after the fall of Adam. The coming of Our Lord is the central point to which all ages tend, and round that one event all the past and future hopes and possibilities of the human race eternally revolve.

To say all that Jesus Christ is would be beyond the possibilities of human speech.

He is the invisible God become visible, and appearing in the midst of His creatures; He is the infinite, eternal, and almighty Creator, clothed with a humanity like unto ours, and become, for love of us, mortal, passible, subject to time and to all human miseries save sin. Jesus is the only God, Creator of all things, Creator of angels and of men, our first principle and our last end, whose knowledge is true light, whose service is true joy, whose love is the only true happiness.

In Jesus Christ divinity and humanity are united in an indivisible and perfect manner, without being confounded. There is in Him one, and one only Person, which is the Person of God the Son, and for this reason Jesus Christ is eternal, infinite, and almighty; in one word, He is God. But at the same time He is man. He was created, He was born, He grew, He suffered, He died as perfectly man as He is perfectly God. In eternity He has a Father, and no mother; in time He has a mother, the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, and no father. He derives from His father His divine and infinite nature, and from His mother His human and mortal nature. It is through Him we gain access to God His Father, and it is through His mother that we gain access to Him. Jesus is the mysterious bridge which unites in one the Creator and the creature, being Himself both Creator and creature, God and man; and the arch by which this heavenly bridge is united to creation is the most holy Virgin, who gives to Him her own humanity. Jesus Christ is to His creatures just what the head is to the members of the body; the head guides and directs the whole body, communicating life to it; in like manner Jesus communicates to all men, who are His members, divine and eternal life, and the Blessed Virgin is the most pure channel by which all His graces reach us.

You know the touching story of our divine Master's life on earth. During the three years of His public life He preached the gospel; that is to say, He taught to men the knowledge and love of God His Father, and proved His divinity by many miracles, which His enemies themselves could not deny; He chose, moreover, among His numerous disciples, twelve poor fishermen to preach the one true faith throughout the world, thus confounding the pride and vain wisdom of men. Having come into this world to expiate our sins, He took their burden upon Him, and died for us freely and willingly, betrayed by Judas, mocked and scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified between two thieves upon Mount Calvary in Judea; died, with one last divine cry, upon Good Friday, at three o'clock. On Easter Sunday He rose again, by His own power, for our sakes, triumphant over Satan, sin, and death; then He showed Himself during the space of forty days to His Apostles, and to many other disciples, who, being at first incredulous, were afterward obliged to yield before an overwhelming evidence. After giving to them His last supreme instructions, the risen Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, where He commenced His Passion, and it is He, both God and man, King of the world, and Judge of all men, who

will come hereafter to judge us according to our works, and to cast out of His presence, into hell, the devil and all the wicked, and to gather together in a glorious eternity His own most faithful servants.

We shall soon see how we are all united by means of His Church, which is the depository of all the treasures of His love.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST.

A **MIRACLE** is a visible fact, entirely above and beyond the natural order of things; it is the unusual exercise of God's almighty power.

To deny the possibility of miracles is also to deny the power of God, or rather His existence.

Miracles being the seal of divinity, if Jesus Christ were God, He was, in a manner, bound to work miracles, undoubted miracles, miracles by His own power, bearing the impress of His Godhead; and we have, like the Jews of Capharnaum, a right to ask of Him: What sign dost Thou show unto us that we may believe?

Jesus Christ does in no way shrink from this trial. His acts speak even more clearly than His words.

The second time that He went up to Jerusalem for the feast of the tabernacles, Jesus, followed by His disciples, met a poor beggar, blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who hath sinned—this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said these things, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloe." The blind man went therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

But his neighbors would not recognize him. "This is not he," they said, "but a man who is like him." But he said, "I am he." They said therefore to him, "How were thy eyes opened?" He answered, "That man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloe, and wash.' And I went, I washed, and I see." They bring him to the Pharisees, who were met together in the Temple, for it was the Sabbath. The Pharisees were confounded. They questioned the blind man, who told them simply what had passed. "What sayest thou," they asked, "of Him that hath opened thy eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews then did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called his parents, and asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then doth he now see?" His parents answered them, and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now seeth, we know not; ask himself."

The Pharisees therefore called the man again, and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He said therefore to them, "If he be a sinner, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

And as they pressed him with further questions, he answered them, "I have told you already, and you have heard; why would you hear it again? Will you also become His disciples?"

They reviled him therefore, and said, "Be thou His disciple, but we are the disciples of Moses: as to this man, we know not from whence He is."

The man answered, and said to them, "Why, herein is a wonderful thing, that you know not from whence He is, and He hath opened my eyes. From the beginning of the world, it hath not been heard that any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind. Unless this man were of God, He could not do anything."

They answered, and said to him, "Thou wast wholly born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" and they cast him out of the temple. And Jesus, finding him, said to him, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus answered, "It is He that talketh with thee." "I believe, Lord," cried the beggar; and falling down, he adored Him.

And it came to pass afterward that Jesus went into a city that is called Nain; and there went with Him His disciples and a great multitude.

And when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a great multitude of the city was with her. At the sight of the sorrowing mother, Jesus was touched with compassion, and said to her, "Weep not;" and He came near and touched the bier, and they that carried it stood still.

According to the Jewish custom, the dead man had his face uncovered. And Jesus said, "Young man, I say to thee, arise." And immediately he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother.

And there came a fear on them all, and they cried, "A great

prophet is risen up among us; and God hath visited His people." And the rumor of this miracle went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the country round about.

At the end of the first century, one of the immediate disciples of the apostles, by name Quadratus, addressed to the Emperor an apology for Christianity, and cited as irrefragable witnesses of the miracles of Jesus Christ many of those whom the Saviour had thus miraculously healed or restored to life, and who were still living at the time in which he wrote.

Another of the miracles of Jesus Christ had still more numerous witnesses.

Having withdrawn into Decapolis, not far from the Sea of Galilee, a crowd of people, gathered out of the neighboring towns, searched for Him three days, and at last discovered Him on a solitary mountain, surrounded by His twelve disciples, and speaking to them of the kingdom of God.

Touched with compassion at the sight of this great multitude, exhausted by hunger and fatigue, Jesus turned to the Apostle Philip, and said to him, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Philip answered Him, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one may take a little." Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him, "There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are these among so many?" Then Jesus said, "Make the men sit down." And there were about five thousand, not counting women and children. And Jesus took the loaves; raising His eyes to heaven, He blessed and broke, and gave to the apostles, who distributed to the crowd. In like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would.

After the repast, Jesus said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost." And they filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves that remained over and above to them that had eaten.

Just as wheat germinates in the earth, by means of the invisible and creative power of God, and becomes the food of men, so in the sacred hands of that same Creator, when visible in His humanity, bread was multiplied, and became enough for all.

Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said, "This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world."

"The prophet that should come" was no other than the Messiah, who was always thus mentioned by the Jews. Then they all rose in

haste, desiring to take Jesus and make Him King; since all the prophecies relating to the Messiah announced that He should be King of Israel. But the Saviour, perceiving their intention, withdrew alone to the mountain to pray.

Jesus had commanded His Apostles to go down to the coast of Bethsaida, to take a ship, and go over the sea to Capharnaum, where He would Himself rejoin them. But a violent wind soon arose, and at the dawn of day, notwithstanding all their efforts, they had scarcely rowed the space of thirty furlongs, or three leagues. About the fourth hour they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh to the ship. They thought it was a spirit, and gave utterance to their fears. But He, speaking to them immediately, said, "It is I; be not afraid."

Then Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters." And He said, "Come." And Peter, going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the violence of the waves, he was afraid; and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me;" and immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and said to him, "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" And when they were both come up into the boat the wind ceased, and they reached the coast. Seized with astonishment and admiration, the disciples who were in the boat fell at the feet of Jesus, and adored Him, saying, "Indeed Thou art the Son of God."

Thus God remained the Omnipotent Lord of nature, even in the deep humility of His Incarnation; all the powers of nature were obedient to Him, and, in the instant cessation of all tumult and confusion at His simple word, we may see a type of that far more serious tumult and confusion caused by sin—a type of that still deeper evil which lies within ourselves, and which Our Lord came down from heaven to heal.

We might here relate many touching miracles which the Saviour seemed to sow broadcast upon His pathway, and which form, in their divine completion, the story of the gospels: the sudden cure of the blind man at Jericho, to whom Christ said, "See!" and he saw; that of the poor woman bowed down for eighteen years by frightful suffering, and who, by the simple touch of His garments, was immediately healed. To these may be added innumerable manifestations of the divinity and of the tender pity of Jesus.

But among all His miracles there is one which is perhaps the most solemn and the most important, and which furnished the Pharisees

with a pretext for their last machinations—the resurrection of Lazarus.

Lazarus was a sick man much loved by Jesus, and was the brother of Martha and of Mary Magdalen. He lived at Bethania, four leagues from Jerusalem, and had frequently offered hospitality to the Saviour and His Apostles. Lazarus fell grievously ill, and when his sisters found that his life was in danger, they sent to Jesus, who was then in Galilee, saying, “Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.” Jesus answered, “This sickness is not unto death, but that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”

Notwithstanding the love which Jesus bore to Lazarus and his sisters, He still remained in the same place two days; then He said to His disciples, “Let us go into Judea again. Lazarus our friend sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” His disciples therefore said, “Lord, if he sleeps he shall do well.” And Jesus answered, “Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.”

Now when Jesus arrived at Bethania, He found that Lazarus had been already four days in the grave. Martha and Mary were both in their house, quite overwhelmed by grief, and their friends and relations were still with them trying to comfort them. Martha, on being told that Jesus was come, rose instantly, and came quickly to meet Him, exclaiming, “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” And Jesus answered her, “Thy brother shall rise again.” “I know,” said Martha, “that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die forever. Believest thou this?” “Yea, Lord,” cried the faithful Martha, “I have believed that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world.” And she left Him to call her sister. And Mary, rising immediately, came quickly to Jesus, and falling at His feet, she echoed her sister’s words, “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”

Jesus, therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her weeping, was Himself troubled in spirit, and said to them, “Where have you laid him?” They say to Him, “Lord, come and see.” And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, “Behold, how He loved him!” But some of them said “Could not He that opened the eyes of the man born blind have caused that this man should not die?”

Jesus, therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the sepulchre. Now it was a cave, and a stone was laid over it. Jesus saith, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to Him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now dead four days." "Did I not say to thee," answered the Saviour, "that if thou believe thou shalt see the glory of God?" And when the stone was taken away, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. And Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go."

And a great number of the Jews who were present there believed in Jesus Christ, and soon the fact of the resurrection of Lazarus was known throughout Jerusalem and all Judea. And on hearing it, all the enemies of the Lord were seized with rage, and they, with the high priest Caiaphas, gathered a council at Jerusalem, and said, "We must resolve on some measures, for this Man works miracles, and we cannot deny it!"

Neither the Jews nor the Pagans of the first centuries ever thought of denying the miracles of Jesus Christ. And they would not have failed to do so if such a denial had been possible, as this would have been the simplest means of striking at the very root of this new belief. But how could they deny facts which were accomplished in the open daylight, within the very walls of Jerusalem, or in the principal towns of Judea, before an immense concourse of people, and even under the eyes of the enemies of the Saviour?

Still, they found it was necessary to explain away these miracles, to which the Apostles in their preaching continually appealed. Thus, not being able to deny them, they misrepresented them; sometimes they attributed them to diabolic agency, sometimes to the power of magic, and sometimes to a pretended theft of the incommunicable name of Jehovah, of which Jesus might have possessed Himself in the temple; all foolish fables which it is useless to confute.

Pride, false ideas of justice, selfish interests, and a thousand other passions formed a barrier between the Pharisees and Jesus Christ; it was to them He spoke the appalling words which the resurrection of Lazarus so forcibly justified: "Neither will ye believe if one rise again from the dead."

We may all learn one great lesson from the incredulity of the Jews. That even miracles will not give faith, but that something more is needful—a sincere love of truth, the right spirit in seeking for it, and a pure and lowly heart.

Jesus Christ said that He was God; and to this, the chief proof of His divinity, no answer can be made. He confirmed His words by His miracles; and this second proof is as clear and as unquestionable as the first.

There is no need of lengthy arguments to explain how powerful is the proof afforded by such miracles. Those worked by Our Lord are of a special nature peculiar to Himself alone; He worked them by His own power, and without invoking any power beyond His own.—"I will; be thou healed."—"Young man, I say to thee, arise."—"Lazarus, come forth." Saints and prophets have performed miracles, and great miracles, but it has been always in the name of the Lord their God. "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ," said St. Peter to the lame man, whom he cured when entering the temple, "rise up and walk."

The Apostles, the martyrs, and the saints, from the very origin of Christianity, even down to the present time, have worked and have only been able to work miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, and by a power beyond their own.

It is impossible to deny the divine miracles of Jesus; to attempt to do so would show a will more hardened than that of Caiaphas and the Pharisees—those clear-sighted and inveterate enemies of the Saviour. Let us hear their testimony, "This man works miracles, and we cannot deny it."

If we will only hold fast, in all integrity of purpose, to that love of truth of which passion had deprived the Jews, we shall draw from the miracles of Jesus the only logical and evident conclusion, and we shall cast ourselves in spirit at His sacred feet, repeating with all the faculties of our nature the words of him who was born blind: *Credo Domine*—"Lord, I believe."

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

AFTER the three years of His public life, the Son of God made man desired to consummate by death—by the death of the cross—the merciful work of our redemption.

By sin we had deserved death; Jesus took this death upon Himself, and in exchange restored eternal life to all sinners who unite themselves to Him by ardent faith and true love, by unquestioning obedience and sincere repentance.

Innocent, and more than innocent, Jesus made satisfaction for the

guilty, and His Heavenly Father was willing to accept the substitute provided by His infinite love.

The Son of God and of Mary was now thirty-three and a half years of age. He had taught all things, and had prepared all things needful for the world's salvation. He had chosen His ambassadors and His Apostles, the ministers of His mercy, and had formed them Himself in His own school; at their head He had placed Simon Peter as their leader, the vicar of God. Nothing now remained for Him to do, in order to accomplish the prophecies, but to suffer and to die. This infinite suffering, which began at the Last Supper by the sacrilege and treason of the Apostle Judas, and was consummated on the cross of Calvary and in the sepulchre, is called the **PASSION**.

The Passion of the Saviour embraces in a fearful and mysterious manner every description of grief—bitterness of heart, darkness of spirit, anguish and sadness, humiliation and thirst, rending and infamy, and nameless outrage, bodily suffering and annihilations—all of which form, in union with death, the just, the most just punishment of our sins, and, at the same time, their superabundant expiation.

Each one of us, even though having little of the Christian, has often read and often meditated on all the details of that dolorous Passion—the three hours' agony in the Garden of Olives, the bloody sweat, the cowardice of the Apostles, the kiss of the traitor Judas; the blows, the insults, and the ignominious bonds on the way from Gethsemane to the palace of the high priests Annas and Caiphas; the buffeting of the high priest's servants, and the holy meekness of the divine Victim; the false witnesses, the rage, the imprecations, and the spitting; the blasphemy of Caiphas and the miserable judges now turned into tormentors; the triple denial of the unhappy St. Peter; the three or four hours of sacrilegious mockery, of blows and infamy in the prison of Caiphas' palace during the night; the definite and solemn condemnation, after Jesus had been dragged a second time before the Sanhedrim, and had once more affirmed that He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" the interrogatory of the base Pilate; the raillery of King Herod, philosopher and wit; the white garment of a fool and the sceptre of a reed; the silence of Christ when interrogated for the second time by Pilate; the bloody scourging of the Roman soldiers; the old scarlet mantle, and the *Ecce Homo*; the *crucifige* of all the Jewish people, and the final condemnation to death; the carrying of the cross; the sorrowful way with its fourteen stations; and, lastly, Calvary, where the Divine

Lamb, the meek and sinless Saviour, was crucified between two thieves, before His mother's eyes, and hung suspended between heaven and earth, as the standard of the world's salvation, until three in the afternoon, when He cried, "It is consummated," and commended His spirit into the hands of His Father!

Jesus crucified! How great a mystery! Nailed upon the cross, yet reigning, even then, within the highest heaven. He, who was able by His single word to work confusion to all His tormentors, to silence forever the blaspheming and iniquitous judges, His wicked persecutors! He is content to pray and suffer for them, since He is their Redeemer as well as ours; and He says to His Heavenly Father, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

On His right hand was crucified with Him a guilty thief; but this sinful man, moved to repentance, believed in Jesus Christ, and, having hope in Him, he turned to Jesus in deep humility and courageous love, and said, "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." And Jesus answered him out of the depths of His divine mercy and infinite compassion, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." . . . This repentant and converted malefactor is a type of all the elect; a sinner, confessing his sins, hoping, imploring, and obtaining mercy, and expiating his sins even unto death, by uniting his sufferings to the death of the Son of God;—this robber is the representative of all, who, being sinners, suffer here below, and carry the cross as the just punishment of sin, while drawing from the inexhaustible source of the Saviour's love, pardon, salvation, and eternal life.

The other thief, the other crucified malefactor, who blasphemed Jesus Christ, believed not, asked no pardon, and died miserably upon his terrible cross;—*he* represents the sinful man who neither believes nor hopes in Jesus, who does not love the God of Calvary, and suffers uselessly on earth because he does not unite his sufferings to those of his Saviour;—this robber is the sinner for whom Jesus suffered and died, yet who refuses to profit by the salvation that is offered to him.

At the foot of the cross stood the Virgin Mary, as stands the priest before the altar, and the victim; there also was St. John, representing the Church, the priesthood, and all faithful disciples; there was St. Mary Magdalen, and other holy women, symbolizing both repentant and innocent love.

Let us, then, in union with the Blessed Virgin and St. John, with the holy women and the penitent thief, in union with all saints and

angels, adore Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, infinitely holy and infinitely beloved! May His cross recall to us incessantly His love, and may His sacred Blood, so freely shed, penetrate to the inmost recesses of our hearts, through a frequent reception of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in which He dwells, perfect God and perfect Man, thus enabling us to participate in all the merits of His glorious redemption.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

FOURTEEN times during the course of His preaching, Jesus Christ had announced that after His suffering and His death He would rise again on the third day, and He had clearly pointed out His resurrection as the sure sign by which not only His Apostles but the faithless Jews should hereafter acknowledge that He was truly the Son of God. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

This prophecy was so well known to the enemies of Jesus, and they so thoroughly understood its great importance, that their first care, after the descent from the cross, was to watch the Holy Sepulchre, to send soldiers to guard it, and to affix the public seal on the opening to the grave. This vindictive foresight, with the incredulity of the Apostles, and especially of Thomas, have all turned to our profit; but still, the resurrection of Our Lord being for us the miracle of miracles, the proof beyond all proofs, it is of extreme importance that we should thoroughly know the details, and should rest our belief upon the evidence.

Divine Providence has, as it were, provided for this by surrounding the resurrection of the Saviour with circumstances so clear and concise as to strike conviction to the heart of any reasonable man.

After the death of Jesus, St. Peter and St. John had rejoined Mary, and had retired with her to weep and pray.

St. John himself acknowledges in his Gospel that they had all for gotten the prophetic words of the Saviour touching the resurrection. The Blessed Virgin alone, being initiated into the mysteries of Christ, knew what would happen, but hid this knowledge in her heart.

As to the Apostles, they had all dispersed on the Friday evening,

after the treason of Judas in the Garden of Olives; they had passed the Sabbath day and the day of the Passover in the deepest dejection, under the influence of one prevailing sentiment—fear of the Jews. It appears, however, that they all assembled during the night that preceded the resurrection. Thomas Didymus, seized with a sudden panic, had fled far away. Ever since the Friday evening the chief priests had sent constant relays of soldiers to guard the Saviour's tomb; this fact was not known to the holy women, who, having returned to Jerusalem, were not able to go out on the Sabbath day.

At the very moment in which day began to break, the Holy Sepulchre was suddenly shaken, and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven; and his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow, and for fear of him the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men; the sealed door was broken open, the stone was rolled back—the Lord had risen! . . . Thus He fulfilled the word that He had spoken, "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father."

When the guards had recovered from their fright, they fled to the town, and went to relate to Caiphas and the high priests all that had just passed; but they, persistent in their unbelief and hardened by hatred, gave to the soldiers a considerable sum of money that they might spread abroad a report that, during the night, profiting by their sleep, the disciples had come and had taken away the body of their crucified Master. This foolish story has nothing to support it. The Apostles were afterward able, at Jerusalem, and even in the temple, openly to expose this palpable lie, told by the Saviour's enemies.

Mary Magdalen, the converted sinner, the faithful and courageous Christian of Calvary, went out from Jerusalem on the Sunday morning before sunrise to weep at the grave of her dead Lord and Master. When Magdalen reached the little garden, which, according to Jewish custom, surrounded the sepulchre, she saw with bewilderment that the door was open and the stone rolled back. . . . The grave was empty. She ran immediately to tell Peter and John, who hastened to the grave, Magdalen following them.

The Blessed Virgin was alone in her dwelling when, according to tradition, her beloved Son appeared first to her, as to the most worthy of all creatures.

St. John, being the younger, arrived the first, but did not venture

to go in before St. Peter, whom Jesus had already designated as the head of the Church. Peter then went down the few steps which led into the sepulchre, and assured himself of the truth. The napkin was still there, and the linen clothes that had been about the head of the Son of God were folded and lying apart.

The two Apostles were much troubled, and returned in haste to tell the other disciples what had happened. But Mary Magdalen remained there still when they were gone, and kneeling near the sepulchre, gave way to tears; but, after a little time, she drew near once more to the entrance of the tomb, and looking in, she now perceived, on each side of the stone where the body of Jesus had been laid, two angels under the form of two young men clothed in white. "Woman," said they to her, "why weepest thou?" "I weep," she answered, "because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

And as she spoke, she caught a glimpse of the figure of a man standing a little behind her, and, thinking it must be the gardener who had care of the garden graves, poor Magdalen spoke to him, weeping, "If thou has taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him." But at the sound of His well-known voice, calling her by name, *Mary*, she trembled, and looked up; and lifting her eyes to His face, she knew her Lord and Master, and fell prostrate at His feet, in that first moment of her joy.

Jesus said to her, "Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and to your God." . . .

A little time after this, three other holy women, Joanna, Mary the mother of St. James, and Salome, came to the sepulchre, bringing sweet spices, that they might finish the work of love they had commenced on the evening of Good Friday. Ignorant of what had passed, they were much troubled as to how they should be able to gain entrance to the tomb, because of the heavy stone which they had seen placed before it.

As they drew near they perceived, with no less astonishment than Magdalen, that the door was open and the stone lying near; and as they were afraid, an angel, sitting on the right side of the sepulchre, reassured them by these consoling words: "Fear not. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; He is risen; He is not here. Why seek you the living with the dead? Remember how He spake unto you, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. But

go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you unto Galilee."

Then, remembering this prophecy, and full of holy awe, they turned and fled in silence. But, behold, even upon the road, they perceived their divine Master, who met them, saying, "All Hail!" And falling down before Him, and clinging to His feet, according to the Eastern custom, they adored Him. And Jesus said, "Fear not. Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee;—there shall they see Me." And He vanished out of their sight.

The Apostles and the disciples, to whom Magdalen and the holy women related all that had passed, refused to believe their words.

In the afternoon, on the day of the Resurrection, two disciples were going to a town named Emmaus, and were talking together on the coming of the Messiah, when Jesus, changed in appearance, drew near to them, and asked the subject of their conversation. "We are looking for our Master," they said, "the Salvation of Israel; but, behold, to-day is the third day, and nothing has happened." Then the Saviour answered, "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all the things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?"

Then the divine Traveller revealed to His companions the mystery of the Scriptures, proving to them how clearly they pointed to Himself.

On reaching Emmaus, they entreated Him to stay with them and to partake of their repast; and Jesus, having taken the bread, blessed it, as on the night of the Last Supper, broke it, changed it into His own adorable Body, and gave communion to His two disciples. And immediately their eyes were opened, and they knew the Lord; but He vanished out of their sight.

And as they returned to Jerusalem, they said one to the other, "Was not our heart burning within us while He spoke to us on the way?"

The risen Jesus still desired by two clear and distinct manifestations of Himself to triumph completely over the incredulity of the Apostles, and the still more obstinate unbelief of Thomas.

One day when the disciples were gathered together, the doors being closed, He appeared, standing in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace be to you; it is I. Fear not." And He showed them His hands and His feet, where the stigmas of the redemption still remained. "Handle and see," added He, "that it is I Myself; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones. Have you here anything to eat?"

and when they had offered Him a broiled fish and a honeycomb, He ate before them, distributing among them the rest. And at last the Apostles, thoroughly convinced, fell down before the Son of God and adored Him; but even then He reproached them that they had been so slow to believe, saying to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead on the third day, and that penance and the remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." Then He breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." How beautiful the harmony between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of sinful humanity, since it was even upon Easter Day that our God and Saviour instituted confession, and thus triumphed over the spiritual death of sin, by giving to all men the means of a spiritual resurrection.

Thomas, now returned to Jerusalem, was the only one who refused to believe so many witnesses. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails," he said, "and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Therefore, the eighth day after Easter, the Apostles, and this time Thomas with them, being gathered together in the upper chamber for prayer, and the doors being closed, Jesus stood suddenly in the midst of them, and turning to Thomas, He said, "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing." The Apostle, now convinced, fell on his knees, exclaiming, in faith and repentance, "My Lord and my God!" Then, in tones of reproof, Jesus answered him, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

This, then, is the last link in the chain of evidence which attests the resurrection of our Lord, and it was, as St. Gregory remarks, for the confirmation of our faith that God permitted such marvellous unbelief. Could those who might refuse to believe the Apostles possibly refuse to accept the testimony of St. Thomas? Therefore Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, died upon the cross to expiate our sins and truly rose from the dead by His own power; therefore the Christian faith is divine and absolutely certain; therefore the Catholic Church, which brings to us this faith, is the mother of our souls and the harbor of salvation.

Let us have more faith than Thomas; let us believe without see-

ing, the truth affirmed by the Gospel, by the holy Apostles and martyrs; let us believe, love, and adore our risen Lord. "He who believes shall be saved: he who believes not shall be condemned."

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

Forty days after Easter Our Lord appeared for the last time to His disciples, near to Jerusalem. The eleven Apostles, and more than five hundred disciples, were present. It was noonday when He appeared to them, and He led them to the Mount of Olives, and to a place of which the exact spot is still preserved in the tradition of the holy places.

"Behold," He said, "I send the promise of My Father upon you, and you shall be endued with power from on high." Then lifting up His hands to bless them, He added, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

And even as our divine Lord was speaking to His Apostles this last solemn farewell, He rose in unspeakable majesty above all the prostrate crowd, and soon a bright cloud received Him out of their sight.

Since then, the glorified body of Jesus Christ has been in a supernatural and ineffable condition, of which nothing on earth could give us any idea. Although having a body truly human, He is invisible to our earthly eyes; our hands cannot touch Him, our senses cannot attain to Him. He deigns, in His great love, still to dwell among us by means of the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, where He is truly present, though veiled under the appearances of bread and wine.

Jesus waits for us in heaven; and those who serve Him faithfully, who hate sin, obey the Church, and frequent the Sacraments, have a sure and certain hope of meeting their Lord in heaven when their earthly pilgrimage is done. His glorious Ascension is the pledge of our own entrance into paradise. It is the last and most wonderful of those miracles by which He deigned to confirm our faith and to render us absolutely certain of the divine nature of the Christian religion. This Ascension, at the full noonday, in the clear daylight, in the presence of more than five hundred witnesses, is a fact that it

is simply folly to deny. Those who incredulously reject it are forced to do violence to the most elementary rules of logic, of reason, and of good sense. Catholics rest their faith upon decisive reasons and upon the evidence of indisputable demonstrations, while the sceptical are reduced to an irrational denial of what they cannot possibly disprove; and, failing arguments, will invariably take refuge in senseless ridicule, angry invective, or pointless satire, which does but prove them conscious of the weakness of their cause and of the instability of the ground on which they stand. Thanks be to God, who has founded our faith and all our hopes upon no metaphysical reasoning, but upon simple facts which are open to the whole world—clear, unquestionable facts, on which the immediate and necessary consequence is the divinity of Jesus Christ, the infallibility of His Church, and the necessity for all men who desire to be saved to believe in God, in Jesus Christ, the true and living God, to obey the Pope and the bishops, and to practise religion just as it is taught them by the Pope and the bishops in the name of Jesus Christ and in the name of our Heavenly Father. Nothing could be more reasonable and provable than the Catholic faith, which rests upon the truth as upon an immovable rock. Let us guard it carefully in the midst of a world which blasphemes the faith it knows not. Let us guard it carefully from a danger greater still—from the contagious influence of careless, inconsistent Christians, who have not the constancy to remain faithful to the holy engagements of their baptism.

PENTECOST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BEFORE ascending into heaven, the Word Incarnate had promised to St. Peter and the Apostles that He would send to them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of justice, and of love, to become the Soul of the Church.

He had, moreover, commanded them to wait at Jerusalem, in retreat and prayer, this miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost. In obedience to this, and in expectation of the fulfilment of this promise, St. Peter and the Apostles, with seventy-two disciples and the holy women, had withdrawn to the upper chamber, and there, grouped around the Blessed Virgin, mother and queen of the budding Church, they persevered in fasting and in prayer.

Thus nine days passed away. The tenth was the fiftieth after Easter, and was also the anniversary of the promulgation of the Decalogue by the Lord in the midst of the thunders of Mount Sinai. On

this tenth day, at about nine in the morning, the whole house trembled, and the room in which the Apostles and the Blessed Virgin were assembled was filled with a supernatural flame—a symbol of the Holy Spirit, of whom Mary was the living temple.

It descended upon each of the Apostles under the form of tongues of fire, penetrating and completely transforming them. At that moment they received both the plenitude of heavenly gifts and the fulfilment of all the promises of the Saviour; the Catholic Church received its confirmation and its divine mission; and it was then, according to the most ancient traditions, that St. Peter, the first Pope, surrounded by all his brethren, celebrated for the first time the divine sacrifice of the Mass.

Now all this was noised abroad throughout Jerusalem, and many thousands of Jews came in haste to Mount Sion. St. Peter, seeing this multitude, had pity on them, and going out with the Apostles, he began to preach to them the resurrection and divinity of Jesus Christ. And all the Apostles joined in glorifying the loving-kindness of the Saviour. Then it was that God worked a great miracle—the Apostles preached in one language only, and there were present there men out of every nation under heaven, who were quite unable to understand Hebrew, and yet all understood the Apostles, and every man believed that he heard them speak in his own tongue. By this God desired to teach that His Apostles were helped by Him, and also that the Church is the universal society of all people, and that, by means of the Church, all are united in the same faith, in the same truth, and in love for the same Lord.

Seeing this great wonder which none could deny, almost all present unhesitatingly adored the God of St. Peter and the Apostles, and they cried, "What shall we do?"

Then St. Peter instructed them briefly in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, prepared them for baptism, and, assisted by his brethren, he that day baptized nearly five thousand. The following Sunday three thousand more became Christians. This was the nucleus of that great and imperishable Catholic Society, which, from that time, has gradually extended over the whole world, teaching all the great nations of the earth to acknowledge Jesus as their King, and inculcating the lessons of holiness and peace, of devotion and charity, of purity of morals, and human respect; teaching, in one word, all that is great and true and noble upon earth.

The Holy Spirit is, I repeat, the soul of the Church. It is He who animates, sustains, and protects it, who gives it life, and makes it

fruitful in all good works; it is He who brings destruction upon its enemies; it is He who maintains in the true faith and constantly assists the Pope, its infallible head.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and dwells in all fulness in the Sacred Heart of the Saviour as in a home of life and love. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son as from the Father, and reaches the faithful only through the divine channel of the Heart of Jesus,

Our Lord, the invisible Head and Ruler of His Church, works only through the Holy Spirit, whom He sheds as a heavenly dew upon the souls of the faithful.

Thus it is the Holy Spirit who gives to the Sacraments all their virtue, to the Pope his infallibility, and to bishops and priests their sacred prerogatives.

It is the Holy Spirit who governs and directs the Church, sanctifies the saints, and strengthens the martyrs. It is the Holy Spirit who makes fruitful all Catholic institutions, and inspires all noble deeds.

Nothing exists, and nothing can exist, without the working of the Holy Spirit, since He is, with the Father and the Son, the only true and living God, Creator, and Lord of all things.

Fallen angels and sinful men drive Him from their hearts, where, with the Father and the Son, He ever desires to dwell. But the faithful children of God and of the Church guard themselves carefully as the temples of the Holy Ghost, knowing well that the indwelling spirit of their God is the most priceless possession, the source of all grace, and the germ of eternal happiness and glory.

Every year, fifty days after Easter, the Church, in remembrance of the Holy Ghost, solemnly celebrates the beautiful feast of Pentecost, which is, next to Easter and Christmas, the greatest of the year.

THE GOSPEL.

MANY speak of the Gospel without having any knowledge of it. Many have never read it; and some would even be troubled to explain clearly what it is.

Hence it follows that, on the subject of religion and Christianity, people believe just what they have been educated to believe; thus, in our days, as in the time of Luther and of Calvin, we may see thousands of unhappily misguided people who, deluded by false teachers, hate their brethren, and blaspheme the most sacred things, all in the name of the Gospel!

The Gospel is a book; it is the abridged history of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This sacred history was written by four eye-witnesses, or contemporaries of Jesus Christ. They wrote what they had seen with their own eyes, and had heard with their own ears. Two of them were among the number of the twelve Apostles: these were St. Matthew and St. John. The two others, St. Luke and St. Mark, were only companions and disciples of the Apostles, and wrote from their dictation.

There are then, properly speaking, four gospels, or histories of Jesus Christ. But they have all been written for one end—to teach men to know, love, and adore the Saviour, and therefore they are all united in one single volume called the Gospel, which means good news—news of salvation.

These four books were all inspired by the Holy Spirit, and written under His guidance. They relate the actions and the most important words of Jesus Christ. Each Gospel explains and develops another; the one is the supplement or completion of the other.

The first Gospel which was written is that of St. Matthew. It is called for this reason the Gospel according to St. Matthew. It was written at Jerusalem, about fifteen years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

During those fifteen years, the Apostles, under the direction of St. Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ and their supreme head, had preached the doctrines of their divine Master; they had made Him known to the world; they had related His miracles and repeated His sacred words; but they had written nothing. It was their teaching, and their teaching only, which had been for fifteen years the Christian's rule of faith. "Go," the Lord had said to them, "go, teach all nations; preach the Gospel to every creature; teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me."

The ministry of the Apostles was therefore the ministry of speech. They preached and administered the sacraments; they baptized, they heard confessions, they confirmed, they ordained deacons, priests, and bishops, celebrated every day the sacrifice of the Eucharist, gave Holy Communion to the faithful, and extreme unction to the sick.

But the time came when it was necessary for them to disperse throughout the world to conquer the whole universe for God.

Before they separated, the Apostles, moved by the entreaties of the

converted Jews of Jerusalem, charged the Apostle St. Matthew to leave them in writing the principal teachings and most remarkable events of the Saviour's life, which this same Apostle had so often preached to them. This written history was to be for their consolation, and that they might hold it in still more faithful remembrance. St. Matthew wrote, therefore, the first history of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of St. Matthew is written in Hebrew or Syriac, which was the common language of the Jews at that time. His principal endeavor was to prove, by the deeds and words of Jesus Christ, that He was the Messiah, the Redeemer expected by the Jews, the Son of God made man, and that He had in Himself fulfilled all the prophecies relating to the Messiah; that He had truly risen from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and had ascended into heaven, that where He is we might be also.

St. Mark, who wrote the second Gospel, was not one of the twelve apostles, but he was the disciple of the prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, his secretary and companion in his apostolic career. He followed him to Rome, and it was there that he wrote his Gospel, thus transmitting to writing, for the consolation of the faithful at Rome, an abridgment of all that his master, St. Peter, had preached to them.

This history of Jesus Christ, equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, was approved by the prince of the Apostles, and was circulated from thence throughout the Christian Church. It was written in Latin, the common language of the Romans at that time.

St. Mark was made a bishop by St. Peter. He evangelized Egypt and the north of Africa, and died a martyr.

St. Luke, the third historian of Jesus Christ, was a Greek. He was a physician and a painter. He was the friend and faithful companion of the great Apostle St. Paul, who had been taught, by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ, all the mysteries of Christianity. St. Luke wrote in Greek what St. Paul was preaching in Greece and Asia. His principal object was to rectify several facts, and much that was most important in the teaching of Jesus Christ which had been altered by ignorant or ill-intentioned men; for even in the time of the Apostles there were heretics—that is to say, people who would alter the Christian religion. It is for this reason, St. Luke himself says, that he begins from the very origin of Christianity. He speaks of the great forerunner of the Messiah, St. John the Baptist; he relates all the details of the Incarnation of the Son of God in the womb of Mary; he gives a clear account of the Annunciation of the angel to Mary at Nazareth; of the Holy Nativity at Bethlehem, and of the

earliest incidents of the Saviour's life. He consulted the Apostles and the disciples, and probably the Blessed Virgin herself, as he preached with St. Paul at Ephesus and at Jerusalem, where Mary was as the mother and counsellor of the budding Church.

St. Luke wrote, equally with St. Matthew and St. Mark, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who preserved the historians of Jesus Christ from all possibility of error.

And, lastly, the fourth Gospel was written by the Apostle St. John, the much-loved disciple of Jesus Christ, who alone, of all the Apostles, saw Jesus die upon the cross, who was given by Jesus when dying to Mary, to fill His vacant place and to watch over her.

An interval of nearly fifty years separates the three first Gospels from that of St. John. The Apostle was in Asia, at Ephesus, and was nearly a hundred years old. New and more vigorous heresies sprung up as the Apostles, one after another, died. St. John alone was living. It was in vain that the early Christians pointed out to these heretics how utterly their new doctrines were opposed to the teaching of the Apostles, recorded in the three Gospels, and preached by the bishops, their legitimate successors. These daring innovators did then exactly what Protestant theologians, face to face with the Church, do now; they distorted the meaning of the sacred words which were cited in opposition to them, and clung obstinately to their errors.

Then the faithful had recourse to the aged Apostle, who, when he had communed with God, commanded fasting and public prayer throughout the Church, in order to obtain the illumination of the Holy Spirit; then, after a long ecstasy, during which God revealed to him heavenly secrets, he wrote the first words of his Gospel—words that seemed drawn from the very bosom of the Eternal.

The Gospel of St. John was written in Greek, which was the language then spoken at Ephesus. It was, like the three earlier Gospels, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and breathed still more of the spirit of divine love.

St. John dwells most emphatically on the words and miracles of Jesus Christ, which clearly prove the divinity of the Word, and His perfect equality with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

Such are the four authors of the history of Jesus Christ, which is the greatest, most sacred, and most authentic of all histories.

The Gospel is, with the Holy Eucharist, the most precious treasure of the Church. It is the manual of the faithful, the mirror of their lives, and the model which they should incessantly follow.



ADORATION OF THE THREE HOLY KINGS.



THE MADONNA OF THE ROSARY.



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.



THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Let us never read those holy pages but with faith, reverence, and love; and with an earnest desire to become holier each day by conforming our lives more nearly to the life of Jesus Christ, our divine Master, and our great Example.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE word Assumption means lifting up to heaven, carrying away from earth to heaven. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is the mystery of the happy death of the Mother of God, of her miraculous resurrection, and her assumption into heaven, where, being invested with the glory of her divine Son, she reigns forever, Queen of heaven and earth.

A poor and lowly virgin, Mary was born at Nazareth, four thousand years after the fall of Eve, and about fifteen years before the Incarnation of the Saviour. She lived at first in the temple at Jerusalem with holy women consecrated to God. Her life was passed in prayer, in work, and in innocence. Espoused to St. Joseph, her relation, and the descendant, like herself, of David, Abraham, and Noah, she and her betrothed husband both lived in perfect continence; both had taken a vow of perpetual virginity.

We have already related how the Angel Gabriel appeared to her at Nazareth. In a poor stable at Bethlehem, she brought into the world Jesus, her Son and her God.

She passed thirty years with Jesus and St. Joseph in prayer and poverty and daily work. The model of interior souls, Mary made no outward show; all her life, all her glory was hidden in Jesus Christ. She passed her days and nights in closest communion with Him; she listened to Him, she talked with Him, but, more than all, she loved Him. She followed Him during His three years of teaching, and she was with Him through all the phases of His dolorous Passion, even unto Calvary, where she received His last sigh.

Before His death, Jesus bequeathed her to St. John, His much-loved Apostle, as His dearest possession and most sacred heritage. "Behold thy mother," He said to St. John, and turned His dying eyes to Mary.

All true Christians, being themselves the well-beloved disciples of Jesus, were represented on Mount Calvary by St. John; and at that supreme moment they received the Blessed Virgin for their mother; and Mary loves them all as her adopted children, by reason of the love she bears to Jesus, who dwells within them.

Mary was the first, according to the Fathers, to whom the risen Jesus appeared. She followed Him to the Mount of Olives, where she watched Him ascend into heaven. Then she retired with the apostles to the upper chamber at Jerusalem, and ten days after the Holy Spirit, who already dwelt in all fulness in Mary, as in His most pure sanctuary, was poured forth with the splendor of the divine Majesty upon the first Pastors of the Church, to bestow on them all graces needful for their apostolic mission.

Thus Mary assisted, as Queen and Mother, in the foundation of the Church, in the first preaching of the prince of the Apostles, and in the first efforts made by the zealous disciples of her Son.

She followed St. John, her adopted son, to Ephesus, then returned with him to Jerusalem; and there, at the age of sixty-three, or some say of seventy-three years, the Virgin Mary, surrounded by Apostles whom the divine Providence had gathered together at Jerusalem, fell asleep in Jesus on August 15th, in the forty-eighth (or fifty-eighth) year of the Christian era.

Being the holiest of creatures, her soul entered immediately into the glory of heaven. Her sacred body was buried and laid in the sepulchre by St. Peter and the other Apostles with the most tender reverence and sorrow. They kept her raiment, and, among other things, her veil, of which many churches still possess some fragments, and of which a considerable portion is said to be at the Church of Chartres in France.

There is a sacred tradition that God had permitted the apostle St. Thomas to be absent at the death of Mary, in order that her glory might be more clearly manifested. Warned of this great event by a divine inspiration, St. Thomas hastened to Jerusalem, but he arrived too late; for three days her sacred body had rested in the grave. Deeply grieved, St. Thomas earnestly requested to be allowed to look once more upon the much-loved face of the Mother of his Saviour. The Apostles yielded to his prayers, and then, accompanied by a large gathering of the Christians of Jerusalem, they all went together to the sepulchre, singing hymns and psalms. They opened the tomb; but what were the surprise, admiration, and holy rejoicing of all present, when, instead of the body of Mary, they saw the linen clothes reverently folded, and the grave filled with flowers!

However this may be, the constant tradition of the Church teaches that the angels had been sent by Jesus to raise from the dead and bear to heaven the mortal remains of that most Holy

Virgin who had become their Queen by the glory of her divine maternity. For even as the mother of a king is infinitely above his servants, so Mary, the Mother of God, is infinitely above all saints and angels and archangels—above all the cherubim and seraphim of heaven. Immediately beneath Jesus Christ, she reigns with Him, and by Him, over all His creatures.

The Assumption is the crowing glory of the Mother of God. Christians celebrate it by a solemn festival. It is a day of joy, for it is the day on which the Queen of Christians died, and death to the Christian is not the gloomy end of all things, but the happy deliverance from the sorrows of life, the joyful entrance into the unutterable gladness, which on earth they could only hope for and desire. It is the day on which Mary triumphed over death; it is the day on which our Mother was eternally crowned. Happy shall we be if we are the true children of this most holy Mother; happy, if by a faithful following of Jesus Christ, we deserve that she should regard us as her children.

Let us ask her to bless us, to obtain for us a happy death, and to conduct us, after the sorrows of life, to that blessed country where she reigns with Jesus Christ throughout eternal ages.

THE CHURCH.

God is known to us through Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is known to us through the Church. The Church leads us to the Son of God our Saviour, and He leads us to God His Father. Without Jesus Christ there is no true God; without the Church there is no true Christianity.

By the term Church three distinct things may be understood, although these three are all expressed in the one word.

I. The great society of all reasonable creatures who know the one true God, and are in close relations with Him by means of religion, whether in heaven, on earth, or in purgatory. In this sense we are all members of the Church.

II. The government established by Jesus Christ to preserve His children in true faith, unity, peace, and holiness; in this sense the Church signifies the Pope and the bishops, assisted by such coadjutors as they themselves provide.

III. The material Temple, where the members of the Church meet upon certain days, under the direction of their legitimate pastors to honor God by public worship, and to receive religious in-

struction. But we are not now speaking of the Church from this third point of view.

The Church is, then, a great society, the family of God upon earth. The Father of this great and holy family is in heaven, and is God Himself, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by making Himself our Brother, has changed us from servants of God into His children.

Our Mother is the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Mother of Jesus our elder Brother.

Our Heavenly Father and our Brother, and also Mary our Mother await us in our true home in heaven. The Church is therefore the society of peace, unity, and happiness, both in time and in eternity.

To guide us safely in the path of happiness, Jesus Christ has given us in this world a visible father, to whom He has entrusted all the treasures of His mercy and His power. This father is the Pope, successor of St. Peter, vicar of Jesus Christ, pastor of the Christian people, doctor of the true faith, sovereign Pontiff, and bond of unity for all the faithful.

"Thou art Peter," said the Son of God to the first Pope, "and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."

There is, consequently, only one true Church, established by Jesus Christ Himself—divine and imperishable—and this is the Church built upon St. Peter and his successors, the Catholic or universal Church, of which St. Peter and his successors are pastors and pontiffs, and whose centre is Rome, the city of St. Peter. There is only one Pope on earth, as there is only one Christ, as there is only one God, and only those who are obedient to him may feel assured that they belong to the great family of God.

In the pastoral charge of the Pope, Jesus Christ has associated bishops, just as He formerly associated the Apostles with St. Peter. When our bishops are Catholic—that is to say, united to the Pope by faith and obedience, we are as clearly bound to obey them as we are bound to obey the Pope and Jesus Christ Himself, since they are to us the representatives of God.

Beneath the Bishops, and subject to their direction, are the priests, who aid them in their holy ministry, and join in the great work of the salvation of souls, by preaching to the faithful the word of God,

administering to them the sacraments, and celebrating in their midst the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and other offices of public worship.

Such is the Church—the great and holy family of God, the ark of salvation, the peaceful and invincible army which wages warfare with the powers of hell, and marches on through all the centuries—ever on, to the conquest of paradise.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

It is most needful to insist upon one great and fundamental truth, viz., the divinity of the Catholic Church. This is the name given to the great society of Christians, or disciples of Jesus Christ.

We have already seen that the only true religion is the Christian religion, so called because Jesus Christ is its Head, its Master, and its God.

During His life on earth, Jesus Christ chose twelve disciples, whom He called Apostles, which means simply envoys, and He appointed one among them, the Apostle St. Peter, to be their head, when He should Himself have left the earth. Hence it was to the Apostles, and especially to St. Peter, their supreme head, that He entrusted the care of religion. He invested them with His spiritual authority, commanded them to preach the Christian faith throughout the world, and to bring all men under His dominion; and He promised to them, and to their successors, His perpetual assistance even unto the end of the world.

In fulfilment of this promise, ten days after His ascension into heaven, He sent to them His Holy Spirit to remain with them and their successors throughout all ages; the Spirit of Truth, who preserves the pastors of the Christian people from all error in the teaching of the Faith; the Spirit of Holiness, who gives to them the means of becoming holy themselves, and of making all men holy, if obedient to their voice; the Spirit of wisdom and power, who preserves the work of Jesus Christ, and makes His Church triumphant over all the powers of earth and hell.

St. Peter and the Apostles, obedient to the command of Jesus Christ, dispersed over all the world, preaching the true religion. All died martyrs; they were the first Catholic bishops, and in every country where they preached they consecrated bishops and priests, of whom Catholic bishops and priests are alone the actual successors.

St. Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, at which city he was crucified, during the first persecution of the Christians, in the reign of

the Emperor Nero. The Bishop of Rome is the successor of St. Peter, and the inheritor of the glorious promises of Jesus Christ. He is called the POPE, which means the Father of Christians.

The Pope is the Head of the Christian religion. Those who separate themselves from him must separate themselves at the same time from Jesus Christ. When he commands, it is Jesus Christ who commands; when he forbids and condemns, it is Jesus Christ who forbids and condemns.

It is the Pope alone who is the centre of unity for all the faithful; it is by means of his authority alone that their vast numbers form one only flock, one only family, one only Church! Further, there is but one true Church of Jesus Christ, and that is the Church which is governed by the Pope.

If any desire to know if they profess the one true faith, they have simply to ask themselves if they own, as the Head and their spiritual Father, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Catholic Church. For our Saviour desired to give to all a clear and simple test, by means of which they might have no doubt about the true religion.

Jesus Christ founded a Church, for He said *My Church*. And He founded only one Church, for He said *My Church*, and not *My Churches*.

And this one true Church of Jesus Christ, what is it? It is the Church which is founded on St. Peter and governed by St. Peter; it is the Catholic and Roman Church, of which the Pope, successor of St. Peter, is the head, the pastor, and the centre of unity. It is, therefore, only the Pope and the Catholic bishops to whom we must have recourse when we desire to learn all points of Christian doctrine. They alone have received from Jesus Christ power, and a divine mission to mankind. They alone are able, by the perpetual assistance of the Holy Ghost, to preserve the Christian doctrine pure and intact from error. All other men who intermeddle with religious teaching are nothing but intruders and sacrilegious usurpers. Such are all schismatic bishops and priests, and such the whole body of the Protestant clergy.

Priests themselves cannot preach the Christian faith except when they are sent by the bishops.

The Catholic Church is therefore composed of all Christians who are under the guidance of the Pope and the bishops, who profess the true religion, and, possessing it in all its purity, know and practise the law of God, and march on to the conquest of Paradise, where their risen and glorified Saviour awaits them. "No one can have

God for his Father who is not willing to have the Church for his mother"—the words of St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr, sixteen hundred years ago.

Let us then reverence the priests of the Church as the ambassadors of God; let us be ever ready to condemn the attacks directed against them by irreligious men; let us listen to their voice, and be obedient to their teaching; such was the command of Jesus Christ: "Go," said their divine Master to them, "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH.

THERE is on earth a great army which attacks no one, which wounds no one, which kills no one, and yet it fights incessantly, and has marched unshaken during nineteen centuries against the same enemy, through the same perils, on to the same conquest. It is everywhere, yet few people recognize its presence. It is a thousand times more numerous than the armies of the most powerful emperors, and it numbers more heroes in its ranks. It fights against far more fearful foes, and the cross of honor with which it rewards its bravest men is of immeasurably greater value than the decoration of the battlefield.

This army is the Catholic Church. Its great Leader and Commander, already crowned with glory, is Jesus Christ, who reigns in heaven. But its divine Leader has entrusted the entire command of His army upon earth to one man, who commands all the rest, and leads them on to victory. This is the Pope, successor of St. Peter, to whom the Son of God declared, that upon him the Church should be established, and the gates of hell should never prevail against it. God Himself has organized this great army, of which all Catholics form a part. And to those who are faithful to their standard the reward is nothing less than the happiness and the eternal rest of heaven. Nothing is more strange than the ignorance of many with regard to a subject which so closely concerns them. A Christian may not be ignorant of such things, any more than a soldier may be ignorant of the different grades of general, colonel, captain, sergeant, and soldier, in the hierarchy of the army.

Our leader, to whom we all, without exception, owe obedience, is the Pope. This cannot be too often repeated, or too strongly enforced. His spiritual power extends over the whole world. No one is excepted from the great rule of obedience; and cardinals, bishops

and priests are only distinguished from the whole body of the faithful, in their relations with regard to the Pope, by rendering him a more unquestioning submission and a deeper homage.

Such is the express will of the Son of God. Whoever separates himself from the Pope does, at the same time, separate himself from Jesus Christ.

Just as a general who is charged with the care of the whole army can only fulfil his duties when helped by other officers who, under his orders, command the different regiments of the army, even so the Pope is helped in his supreme charge by the bishops who, under his direction, watch over the different divisions of the Church. Each one of these divisions is called a diocese, and takes the name of the town in which the bishop resides; and these different dioceses, in their perfect union, form the Catholic Church.

Priests are the auxiliaries of the bishop, who, in his turn, confides to them different portions of the flock which he is bound to govern, teach, and sanctify. Thus each diocese is divided into many parishes, and the priest entrusted by the bishop with any division of the diocese is called the parish priest. All priests are not parish priests. Those who have not the charge of a parish are either assistant priests or are simply priests living beyond the limits of parochial administration, and exclusively occupied in study, prayer, and teaching the young, in giving missions, in hearing confessions, and in preaching the Word of God, thus exercising, under the close direction of the bishops, all the good works which have for their end the salvation of souls.

Bishops and priests have been, equally with the Pope, ordained by Our Saviour. He it is who has regulated their respective relations, and who has established that great and indissoluble bond of union which may be summed up in one word—obedience. The priest is bound to obey the bishop, as the bishop is bound to obey the Pope.

Just as in the army, the general in command has a staff of officers, who convey his orders to all inferior officers, so in the Church the Pope has about him an ecclesiastical staff composed of cardinals and Roman prelates, by whose help he governs the Church in all its details; for this reason, cardinals are above all the bishops and archbishops in the world. This cardinalate is as the radiation of the Papacy. A cardinal is the intimate adviser of the sovereign Pontiff, and thus participates in his supreme power. It is to the cardinals that the Pope confides the examination and direction of all that

relates to the general government of the Church; and thus they form around him an august senate always ready to assist with advice and most zealous support.

The Pope is always dressed in white; cardinals in red, which is called the Roman purple; archbishops, bishops, and other prelates in violet. All other ecclesiastics wear black.

These different degrees of the sacred authority of the Church should be ever regarded with the greatest respect. Whatever happens, and in spite of the plausible tone assumed by infidel writers, and in mischievous journals, all reasonable men should render a glad and ready obedience to the voice of the Pope, the bishop, and the priest; such obedience is ennobled by the fact that it is rendered unto Jesus Christ Himself, since the priests of His Church were fully invested with His sacred authority by the might of His own infallible words.

THE POPE.

THE first Pope, the first Vicar of Jesus Christ, was the Apostle St. Peter.

Who cannot recall the memorable passages of the Gospel in which Jesus Christ first promised and afterward conferred upon him the sovereignty of the universe? Our Lord was in Judea, in the country bordering upon the town of Cesarea. To try the faith of His disciples, He asked what men thought concerning Him. They answered, "Some believe that Thou art John the Baptist, others Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets risen from the dead." Jesus said to them, "But whom do you say that I am?" And immediately St. Peter, falling on his knees, exclaimed, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Then it was that the Saviour allowed to fall from His lips the words which have travelled down the centuries with such marvellous fertility, and which still shine resplendently at Rome, graven in gigantic characters above the tomb of the Apostle—"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

You have doubtless often heard this passage of the Gospel read,

but have you ever fully fathomed the depth and the strength of its meaning?

First of all, we see that it was God Himself who had inspired St. Peter, and had made known to him the truth of the faith.

"Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven." St. Peter was already the elect of God the Father, and for this reason he became the elect of God the Son. "And I"—the Son of God made man, the Christ, the Messiah, to whom thou hast just rendered witness—"I say to thee." Jesus Christ to St. Peter! the Master to His disciple! God to His Pontiff! the Head of the Church, who has reigned in heaven since His ascension, to him whom He had chosen to be, in His name, and by His authority, the visible head of the Church upon earth. I say to thee, "That thou art Peter." I change thy natural name of Simon into a new and symbolical name. "And upon this rock," this living rock, as upon an immovable foundation, "I will build My Church," and the very strength and firmness of the foundation shall give to it so perfect a stability, and so mighty a power, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Thou shalt teach the truth to My Church, and for this reason it shall be infallible in faith; thou shalt guide it in the path which leads to a glorious eternity, and for this reason it shall be holy. I intrust My Church to thee; I have but one true Church, as a husband who has but one lawful wife. And by what clear and evident sign shall men recognize this one true Church, among the innumerable religious societies which lay claim to her glorious title? By one certain and distinctive mark; if she rest on thee; if thou thyself, and thou alone, art her foundation, strength, and centre of unity—her father, pastor, doctor, and pontiff. "Upon this rock I will build My Church." My kingdom shall be that in which thou shalt reign. My law shall be that which thou shalt teach. Whoever shall be with thee, shall be, for that reason alone, with Me, and whoever shall separate himself from thee, shall separate himself from Me, and from the life eternal.

The powers of hell shall not be able to prevail against the Church, since they shall be powerless against thee. Persecutions shall come, heresies, and revolutions. Fear not, I am with thee, and upon thee ever rests My Church, which shall endure unto the end of the world. Those who desire to break thee shall be broken against thee, since thou art the corner and foundation-stone, destined to become by My power the one centre of attraction to the whole moral world.

And the power that I will give thee shall be proportioned to the

glory conferred upon thee, and to the vast requirements of thy ministry: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind or loose upon earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven;" and thus thy voice shall be as the voice of heaven, and thy infallible dictums shall precede the dictums of the eternal truth. That which thou shalt bless, I will bless; that which thou shalt curse, I will curse. . . . Blessed is the man who is obedient to the voice of Peter!

Such is the true meaning of those scriptural words which have ever confounded, and shall eternally confound, the irrational rebellion of Protestants against the Catholic Apostolic Roman Church, which is governed by the Pope, the legitimate successor of St. Peter.

Before ascending into heaven the Son of God solemnly confirmed His promise, of which some might have imagined that St. Peter by his sin had forfeited the fulfilment. "Simon, lovest thou Me?" Jesus asked three times of His Apostle. "Yea, Lord," St. Peter three times answered; "yea, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" thus effacing by a triple protestation of love and devotion the triple denial of which he had been guilty. Then said Our Lord to him, "Feed My lambs—feed My sheep!" The lambs of Jesus Christ are Christians who are obedient to the voice of this good Shepherd; His sheep are the bishops and priests by whose God-given power and spiritual fatherhood all Christians must be born again—born to the life eternal, by means of baptism, the sacraments, and the teaching of the one true faith.

And thus St. Peter was solemnly appointed pastor of the universal Church by Jesus Christ before His ascension into heaven.

The Pope, Bishop of the city of Rome, of which St. Peter was the first bishop, is the successor of this great and holy Apostle.

Leo XIII., the present Bishop of Rome, descends by an uninterrupted line of pontiffs from the prince of the Apostles. St. Peter commands, teaches, and governs the Christian world by means of Leo XIII., or rather it is Jesus Christ Himself who dwells within him, in order to be in Him and by Him, the divine Head of his own Church. It is not the man whom Catholics revere in Leo XIII.; it is the Vicar of Jesus Christ; it is Jesus Christ Himself who covers him with His shadow, and endows him with a royal supremacy over His disciples.

The man in the Pope should be, and generally is, by the providence of God, worthy of esteem, by reason of his virtues; but even were he an utterly bad man, the divine majesty of his authority would remain uninjured; just as a father, who has a claim upon the

honor and obedience of his children because he is their father, although they may know that, as a man, he has been guilty of many blamable actions. There are two persons in the Pope: the Pope and the man—as a man, he is more or less estimable, according to the virtues that he possesses; as a Pope, he is always worthy of all our reverence, and has a right to our entire and unquestioning obedience. It is not the man, it is the Pope who is always guided by the Holy Ghost.

There have been two hundred and fifty-nine popes, from St. Peter to the time of our Holy Father Leo XIII. now reigning. Of this number more than eighty have either borne the palm of martyrdom, or have led lives of such eminent holiness that they are numbered among the saints. Scarcely two or three have soiled the chair of St. Peter by notorious vice. The greater part have been men eminent either for their capacity, their piety, or their benevolence. But it may safely be affirmed that not one among them has possessed more of the charm of virtue than our present Pontiff, Leo XIII.

The peace of God shines from his face. The well-known characteristics of his calm and equable nature are goodness and benevolence—a clear intellect, and a constant cheerfulness. His regular features, his eyes of an undefinable expression, and the calm dignity of his manner, are in him the visible signs and outward revelations of the beauty of holiness. He is at once the sovereign Pontiff and the good Father. It is a great happiness to receive the blessing of the Pope, and especially of such a Pope. It is a great happiness to be able to make a pilgrimage to Rome, and to see the successor of St. Peter celebrating the Holy Sacrifice upon the very tomb of the Apostle, and offering to the adoration of the faithful the hidden God of whom he is the Pontiff and the Vicar.*

WHICH IS THE TRUE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST?

AMONG the religious communities which all claim to be considered the true Church, it is of the highest importance to distinguish the one which speaks truly from the rest who are deceived.

Our Lord gives us in His Gospel an infallible means, a sure and evident sign by which we may recognize His Church. And is it not an historical fact, clear as the day, and quite beyond the reach of contradiction, that the one Catholic Apostolic Roman Church is founded upon St. Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, the first Pope?

* See "Infallibility of the Pope," vol. i., p. 815.

Therefore all other Churches, whatever they may be, are false Churches, which do not come from God, and do not lead to God, but are opposed to the Gospel, and have no right to say that they are in conformity with the divine institution.

Therefore every true-hearted and truth-loving man, who has the fear of God before his eyes, is bound by his conscience, so soon as he shall be convinced of error, to go out from that false Church, in which he has had the misfortune to be born, and enter, obedient to the voice which calls him, into the true fold of Jesus Christ, which is the Catholic Church. And if he has the happiness to be born a Catholic, he should thank God for it every day of his life, and should be ready to suffer all things, even death, rather than fail, under any circumstances, in obedience to the Pope.

Nothing is easier than to know if you belong to Jesus Christ and to His Church. You only need to know which Church has the Pope for its Head, and then to enter into this Church. It is a test which requires nothing but simple reason, and which is open to the whole world.

IN WHAT SENSE THE CHURCH IS HOLY.

THE Church of Jesus Christ is holy—that is to say, she is the enemy of all evil, which is sin. Does that mean that all the members of the Church are holy—that all her pontiffs are impeccable? Certainly not. Man here on earth remains always man, viz., weak, inconstant, and more inclined to evil than to good. In what sense, then, is the Church holy? The Church is holy: 1. In the sense that her divine Founder and Master is holy. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Church, and He is holiness itself. 2. In the sense that the first envoys of Christ were holy. St. Peter and the Apostles were the first fathers of the Catholic Church, which they preached and established throughout the world; our own Churches trace their origin to them, through an uninterrupted succession of bishops and pontiffs. And who can tell to what sublime heights of sanctity the Apostles reached who could all say with St. Paul, to those whom they converted, “Be imitators of us as we are of Jesus Christ.” And these holy Apostles not only lived for God, but also died for Him, and have borne the martyr’s palm. 3. The Church is holy in the sense that her doctrine is holy. All that is taught by the Catholic Church is good and true, and comes direct from God. 4. The Church is holy, because, by means of the sacraments, prayer,

and the true worship of God, she renders holy all men who gladly obey her.

The Church tends only to render us all truly holy, perfectly holy, each in our condition. If a Christian does evil, and leaves the path of holiness, it is because he disobeys the Church, and neglects the means of grace she freely offers him. The man who is constant, faithful to the religious direction of the Church, to habitual prayer, to very frequent communion, to Christian instruction, in devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and in all the exercises of Catholic piety, will infallibly and quickly become holy, and will love God and his neighbor with his whole heart. 5. The Church is holy, because she has produced in all centuries, and will ever produce, a glorious band of saints—a band of men, and women, and children, and pontiffs, and priests, who practise all Christian graces with Christian heroism, and who are to other men noble examples of purity and chastity and devotion, of prayer and strength and meekness, of humility and Christian abnegation. The saints are living samples of the finished work of that Church which has produced them—living witnesses to the holiness of the Mother who has borne them. 6. Lastly, the Church is holy in the significant sense that she condemns and rejects from her bosom all that is false, mean, unhallowed, and defiling. She is ever the first to disgrace and stigmatize the few false priests who from time to time renew the treachery of Judas, forget the holiness of their mission, and scandalize the world by some deplorable fall.

Would it be just to impute the crime of Judas to the holy and faithful Apostles of Christ, to St. John, to St. Peter, to St. Paul?

The heartfelt sorrow of the Church when one of her priests falls into sin, the terrible indignation with which she prohibits, expels, and excommunicates him if he persevere in evil, is the most evident proof of her holiness. The weapon which ignorance and unbelief uses against the Church is therefore precisely the one which defends her most victoriously against their perfidious attacks.

The Church is holy, and whoever listens to her voice either is holy, or will become holy.

ON MIRACLES.

MIRACLES are the crowning evidence of Jesus Christ and of His Church. A miracle is an indubitable sign of divinity. What is a miracle? Is such a thing possible? Have there ever been any real miracles. Why have they altogether ceased?

These are some of the questions so fluently propounded by people who flatter themselves that they are acquainted with religion, while they are in truth utterly ignorant of it. We will endeavor to answer their questions as briefly as possible, praying that God may deign to render our arguments effective.

I. A miracle is an outward and visible fact, which clearly surpasses the powers of nature. It is a fact so far above the power of man that he is conscientiously obliged to say to himself, The finger of God is there.

A miracle is the means which God uses to show forth His presence, and to manifest His intervention among men. It is an irrefragable proof, open to all, of the divinity of any doctrine. A man proclaims that he is sent from God; he teaches that the whole world should believe in him, that his doctrine is true, and that it comes from heaven. But in whatever age and in whatever country this claim is advanced, men will immediately ask the very question which the Jews asked of the Saviour, on the borders of the Lake of Tiberias, "What sign dost thou show unto us that we may believe?" and if this man is truly sent from God, still more if (like Jesus Christ) he is God Himself, He will answer by an undeniable proof: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again! . . . The works which do give testimony of Me that the Father hath sent me. . . . Though you will not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

In a word, miracles are the characteristic sign, the inviolable and unmistakable seal which God affixes to His word, and by which He renders any counterfeit totally impossible.

II. "Are miracles possible?"

Is it necessary to answer such a question? It means simply, "Is God the Lord of the whole earth?" Cannot He who ordained and established the laws of nature momentarily arrest these laws, that He may do good to His own children? "This question, seriously treated, would be impious, if it were not absurd," said a celebrated unbeliever, Jean Jacques Rousseau; and any man who could answer such a question in the negative would truly deserve to be treated as insane. But what man has ever denied that God could do miracles?

III. "Have there ever been any real miracles?"

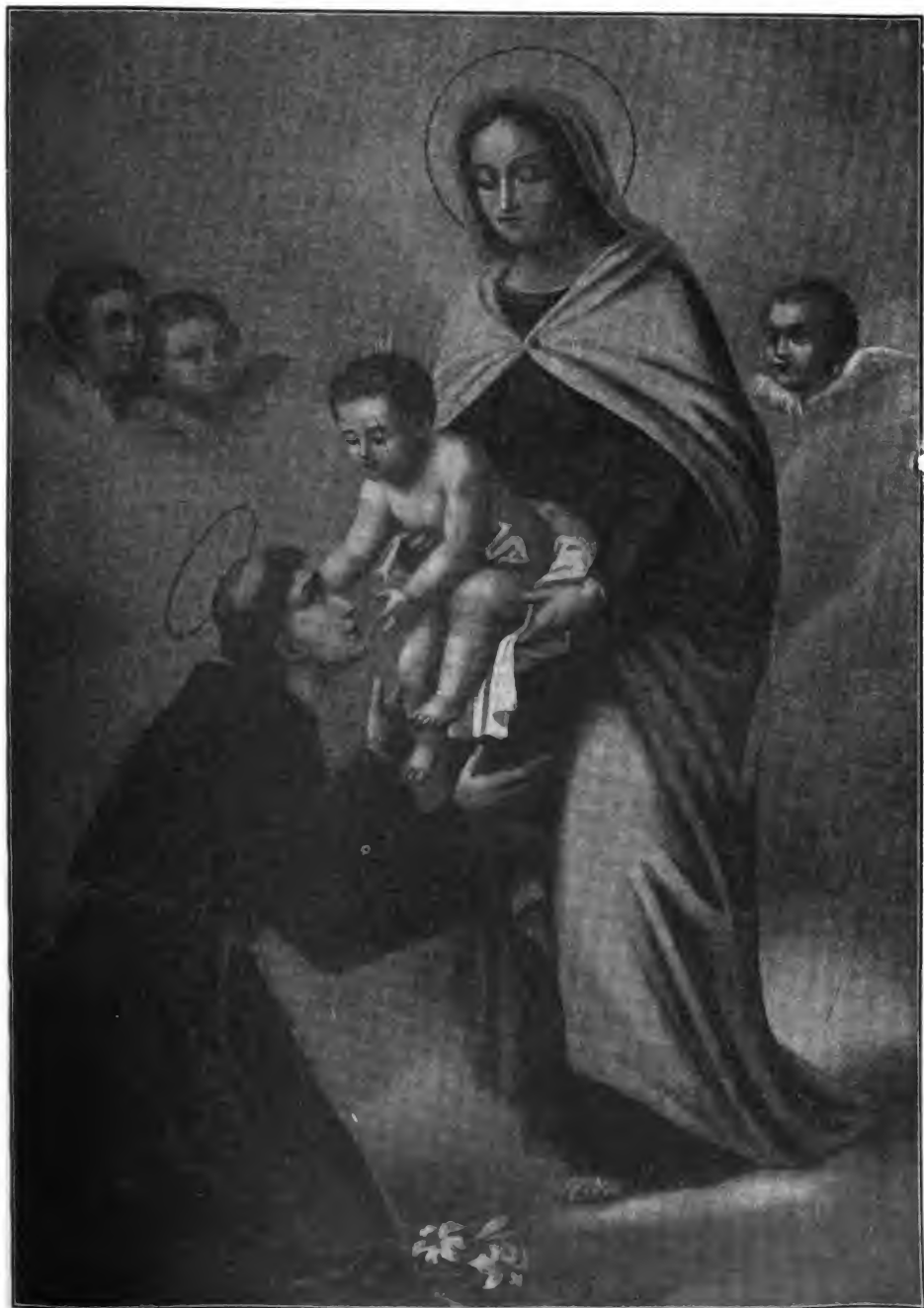
Undoubtedly, since the crucified Jesus, who requires from men the renunciation of all their dearest passions, has been adored for eighteen centuries throughout the length and breadth of the world. To

endeavor to explain the triumph and perpetuity of Christianity without the intervention of many great and wonderful works, is to ignore the very nature of the Christian religion, the nature of man, the history of both; it is a miracle of ignorance and infatuation. Can you possibly believe without doing violence to your reason that when Christianity first presented itself to the world, springing from the foot of the shameful cross, and exacting then, as it exacts now, the sacrifice of prejudice and passion, the sacrifice of worldly honor, goods, liberty, and life—can you believe that men did not simultaneously demand of its Author, “Prove to us that you come from God, by doing the works that God alone can do. Work miracles, or we will neither believe in the strange mysteries you announce, nor practise the hard precepts you command”? Jesus Christ has had His witnesses; and in what numbers, then, is it possible that millions of men, of all ages, of all conditions, in all countries, should have been willing to die the most frightful deaths without having demanded of this religion, for which they sacrificed themselves, an evident proof of its divinity?

“But there are pretended miracles,” some will say; and this is only an additional proof that there are true ones. There must of necessity be good coinage there, where men try to circulate false. Why do they make false coinage? It is because they hope to pass it as genuine money. And how can they hope to do this, if in reality there is no genuine money, to which the spurious bears a resemblance? Thus false miracles have only been credited because they resembled the true, and they are, for this reason, a valuable witness to the reality of such.

“Why have miracles altogether ceased?”

The question is a curious one, for there are still miracles—many miracles. If people were only a little better acquainted with religious facts, they would know that saints are canonized at Rome in our time, as in all past ages; and none are canonized without a rigorous examination which authenticates at least five miracles worked by their intercession. In face of the extraordinary severity which rules this species of trial, and the well-known prudence of Rome, who shall dare to say that there are no more miracles? There are fewer miracles than at the commencement of Christianity—1st, Because the true end of miracles has been attained, namely, the conversion of the world, and the establishment of the Christian religion. 2d, because we have before our eyes to-day as striking and as miraculous a proof of the divinity of our faith as miracles themselves.



ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA.

The Seraphic Doctor, of the Order of St. Francis, and renowned miracle-worker, was born of noble parentage at Lisbon, Portugal, 1195. His preaching and missionary labors were among the marvels of the age. Before his death the Blessed Virgin appeared to him and placed the Child Jesus in his arms. The lily, emblematic of his purity, and his favorite book, the Holy Scriptures, are associated with the picture of the Saint.



BAPTISM OF WITTEKIND.—THURMAN.—Wittekind was the great Westphalian leader of the Saxons against Charlemagne in the 8th century. From A.D. 774 for eleven years he maintained Saxon opposition to Charlemagne, but yielded to negotiations in 786, and accepted Christian baptism in the presence of Charlemagne.

could be to the early Christians. I mean the prophecies of the Gospel and their accomplishment in the world. The early Christians saw the miracles of Jesus Christ and of His Apostles, but they did not see the accomplishment of their prophecies. They were, nevertheless, obliged to believe in them firmly, because of the miracles they saw. Just as a miracle was a decisive proof to the first Christians, so is prophecy a decisive proof to us, who have clear evidence of the divine fact of its accomplishment.

And let us observe, in conclusion, that the evidence gathered from the fulfilment of the prophecies is perhaps still more decisive than that which is gathered from miracles, for this reason, that time adds to its force, day after day. For instance, the stability of the Seat of St. Peter, the preservation of the Jewish people, though cursed and scattered all over the world, are far more striking facts now than they could have been four or five hundred years ago. And how much more will this be the case four or five thousand years hence, if the world last so long (which is more than doubtful)?

Therefore, there are miracles, though fewer than formerly, because the occasion has greatly ceased; and they are sent no longer as an evidence of the truth, but are given as divine consolations. The miracle which fills the world is the Holy Catholic Church.

TRUTH AND ERROR.

THERE is but one true religion, as we have continually repeated. In all centuries the spirit of falsehood and error has raised up in opposition to this holy religion many contrary beliefs which are only human inventions. To all such we give the name of heresy, which means simply a false faith. All have one marked characteristic. Man alone has been their originator, and they do not descend from the Apostles. Separated from the truth, which is nowhere to be found in its completeness but in the Catholic Church, these false religions endure for a time, then perish, having first ruined the souls of men, and brought forth the fruits of indifference and irreligion. In the midst of all the dissension and confusion which ever accompanies mistaken creeds, the ancient Church of God remains ever the same, teaching ever the same true doctrine, preaching ever the same pure morality, and producing ever in the hearts of her children the same sublime virtues. This difference need not cause astonishment; the work of God does not resemble the works of men, and Jesus Christ, the divine Founder of the Church, will not suffer it to be shaken.

Jesus Christ—God;—here lies the all-potent secret of the life of the Catholic Church. The absence of Jesus Christ—separation from God;—here lies the formidable secret of weakness and the ultimate downfall of every false religion.

Toward the end of the French Revolution, men began to feel once more the need of God, and many religious attempts preceded the re-establishment of the Catholic religion by the Emperor Napoleon in the year 1802. One of these useless attempts originated with a certain citizen named Laréveillère Lépiaux, who called his pretended religion the worship of the theophilanthropists, viz., of those who love both God and men. The poor man did not know that this worship was as old as the world, and that its true name was Christianity. Notwithstanding all his efforts, and the public influence he was able to command, as one of the members of the Directory, Laréveillère did not succeed. People laughed both at himself and his ceremonies; and there was much to laugh at. The disappointed founder was one day bewailing his want of success to his friend, M. de Talleyrand, whose answer was both sarcastic and profound. "What can you expect, my dear fellow?" he asked maliciously. "The desire to found a religion is not all that is required. Try to die on Friday, and to rise on Sunday, and you will see that that will succeed."

It is the same with all Protestant sects, and all Churches separated from Rome, as with theophilanthropism—"It does not succeed!" and never will succeed, because truth alone has the privilege of real success.

CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT.

In all Protestant countries, where the great mass of the people are cut off from the communion of the Catholic Church, it is consoling to reflect that, although prevented by ignorance from belonging to the body of the Church, they may yet belong unconsciously to the soul of the Church by living pure and holy lives in accordance with her teaching. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children; and thus it is that Protestants are separated from that Church which is truly the Church of their baptism, and, of by far the greater number of those who resist and condemn her influence and her teaching, it may be said with truth that "they know not what they do." Yet, let no one think for a moment that this sad division is therefore a matter of slight importance, and that it is possible, by unmeaning or by conciliating words, to span the mighty gulf which

separates truth from error; it is of the highest importance to know whether the Catholic who says yes is right or wrong when opposed to the Protestant who says no. Let us, then, briefly consider the chief points upon which they differ.

The Catholic Church presents itself to the world as the emissary of Our Lord Jesus Christ, commissioned by Him and solely commissioned to preach His religion through the whole earth—to preserve the faith entrusted to it, and to defend it against all errors—to interpret Christian revelation, and to make clear to all men what they must believe, practise, and avoid in order to save their souls. She presents herself as endowed with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, who sustains and preserves her in the accomplishment of her divine mission. Protestants, on the contrary declare that the Catholic Church has corrupted Christianity—that her doctrines are contrary to the gospel, and that her teaching is not from God; and thus they cry out with one voice against her, “Away, away! we will not have thee to reign over us!”

The Catholic Church proclaims and reveres in the Pope the successor of St. Peter. The Catholic’s rule of faith is the infallible teaching of the Church—that is, of the Pope and the bishops. The Protestant refuses to acknowledge any doctor but himself—reading the Bible and interpreting it as he will. Hence, among Catholics, a fixed religious doctrine, which nothing can change—immovable as truth itself; and, among Protestants, such a variance in belief that each one can change his doctrine every day and every moment.

The Catholic adores in the Eucharist Jesus Christ Himself, who declared that He was really present there, and that the living bread which He would give to the world would be His own Body. Protestants see in the Eucharist but a symbol, a fragment of bread!

The Catholic venerates and invokes the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of his Saviour. The Protestant regards her with an unconquerable indifference, and entirely misapprehends the nature of the devotion that the Catholic feels to her.

It is asserted that Protestant belief is entirely founded upon the Bible, but it is an incontrovertible fact that one man may explain a passage in one sense, while another will explain it in a totally different sense. Men have been known to have sixteen wives at once, while they cited some passage in the Bible as their authority; others, still under pretext of the Word of God, have believed themselves bound to kill their children after their baptism, in order to send them to heaven; others, in great numbers, have become involved in such

extravagant and grotesque hallucinations that it is hard to conceive how they could have ever been credited. And hence, from a universal system of private judgment, in which there is no unity, arise divisions which lead on to ultimate downfall. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," said the divine Founder of the Christian Church.

And who can deny that unity, the very secret of strength, is to be found in the Catholic Church alone? Do we not see it ever immutable, ever peaceful in its strength, ever fruitful in holy works and saintly lives? . . . There alone may be found the realization of all the solemn promises given by Jesus Christ to His Church; there alone may be found, living and acting, that sacred authority which the Saviour established to lead the faithful in the way of salvation, when He said to His Apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." A very clever Protestant has just become a Catholic, because of the words spoken to St. Peter alone. "Where can their realization be found," he asked, "except among Catholics?" They alone rest upon St. Peter, who continues to govern, teach, and rule the Church. Let us conclude these reflections by one important consideration. A devout and well-informed Catholic has never been known to become a Protestant in order to serve God better, while we see every day, and now more than ever, the most highly enlightened Protestants being led back to the Catholic faith by a profound study of religion, and an earnest desire to live holier lives. Still more, a good Catholic has never been known to become a Protestant when at the point of death; and Protestants have very often become Catholics at that supreme moment, when truth alone could influence so serious a decision.

This single fact should suffice to show upon which side is religious truth.

A FEW FURTHER REMARKS UPON PROTESTANTISM.

IN order to be a Christian it is not sufficient simply to believe that Jesus Christ is God; it is also necessary to believe all that He has revealed to the world, and to practise His religion in the manner that He has Himself commanded. Jesus Christ, by sending His Apostles, proclaimed that all men were bound to listen to their teaching as though it were His own; they alone were commissioned to teach all nations the truths of Christianity, and whoever would not hear them was to be as a heathen unto them. It was the will of

Jesus Christ that Christians should have recourse to them, and to them alone, in all their spiritual needs, and it was for this purpose that He promised to His Apostles and to their successors unto the end of the world the assistance of the Holy Ghost; He clothed them with His own priestly character, that they might have power to sanctify their brethren by the preaching of the true faith, and by the administration of the sacraments, and especially that they might have power to forgive their sins, and to offer continually to God the most holy sacrifice of the Eucharist.

For this reason, those who truly desire to find Jesus Christ, to become children of God, members of His family and sheep in His fold, must go to those who alone were intrusted by the Saviour with all that relates to religion. He that despiseth them, despiseth Jesus Christ; he that rejects them, rejects the religion of Jesus Christ, the true faith, and the knowledge and service of God.

The only legitimate pastors of the flock of Jesus Christ are the bishops of the Catholic Church. Protestants who, unhappily for themselves, reject their authority, are like blind men who fly from the light.

"But," it is again said, "have they not the same Gospel as Catholics?" They have the letter but not the spirit; and the letter kills (as said the Apostle St. Paul); it is the spirit, the true meaning, which gives life. The letter of the Bible is the ruin of Protestants, as it was formerly the ruin of the Jews. Protestants reject, even as the Jews rejected, the sacred teaching of those whom God sends to explain the true meaning of the letter. The Jews rejected the teaching of the Son of God and His Apostles, and their stubbornness proved their ruin.

The Bible is nothing without the Church. The Church is the living and speaking institution founded by Jesus Christ to explain the Bible, to preserve, preach, defend, and practically apply the Christian revelation, of which the Holy Scriptures form a principal part. It is the Church, and the Church alone, who, in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, can infallibly make known the divine inspiration of the Holy Bible; it is she alone who can unquestionably distinguish those books which are inspired from those which are not; it is she alone who can determine the true meaning of obscure or contested passages by the light of the same Holy Spirit, who inspired the books themselves; and lastly, it is from her that Protestants have received these writings. Without the Church, the Bible and the Gospel are nothing but a dead letter—merely words.

The Bible is no longer the word of God, because it is no longer according to the mind of God. Every Protestant—every Protestant clergyman—interprets the sacred words according to the ever-changing tenor of his mind, and often forces them into a false subservience to his own unfounded opinions. This mode of interpretation, carried to an extreme, will even provide its adherents with a cloak for wrong doing, and enable them to say, By following my inclinations I am not only exempt from sin, but I am doing the will of God! This subject recalls to us the slightly stinging answer made by a good and holy prelate (Monsignor de Cheverus, Archbishop of Bordeaux) to a Protestant clergyman who had engaged in a discussion with him, and had cited in opposition to his remarks a number of texts from the Bible—texts both misunderstood and misapplied, and having, besides, no possible connection with each other.

“Is it not written in the Gospel, my dear sir,” said the prelate calmly, when the minister had ended his quotations—“is it not written that Judas hanged himself?” “Certainly,” answered the minister, slightly surprised. “And is it not also written, ‘Go, and do thou in like manner?’ Why, then, have you not yet hanged yourself?” The minister retired from the conflict, ensnared and much confused.

Thus it follows that by constantly applying the Bible illogically, unconnectedly, and according to fancy, men are able to gather from the most sublime of books the most absurd and dangerous ideas. For this reason, a living and infallible interpreter is needed to explain this book, just as a judge and a tribunal are needed to expound and declare a law. This interpreter is the Catholic Church.

ANGELS AND SAINTS.

WE are here on earth only that we may hereafter attain to heaven. There is no exception to this rule, and whoever fails to reach heaven is eternally lost—eternally condemned to the flames of hell. The irreligious and the unbelieving may say what they will; the fact remains the same, and no words of theirs will alter it.

This present life is the time for work; the future life is the time of rest and reward. Those who have already gained this rest and this reward are angels and saints. The angels are pure spirits, who at the moment of their creation, in the beginning of time, adored Jesus Christ, incarnate upon earth, and revealed to them by God from ~~afar~~ and thus merited by this act of faith, submission, and



THE GIFT FROM GOD



THE RETURN TO GOD.

humility all the glory and the blessedness of paradise. At their head is the great archangel or seraphim, St. Michael, the Archangel Gabriel, and the Archangel Raphael, whose sacred names are all mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

All those who among the angelic spirits were not willing to believe in Jesus Christ, and to accept as their true God the Son of Mary, were instantly condemned, and are called devils or demons. The chief among them is named Lucifer or Satan.

The holy angels are in heaven—that is to say, they enjoy, in the bosom of God, and in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, a beatitude which no creature can at all comprehend, seeing God face to face, fully participating in His infinite blessedness, and bathed in the infinite ocean of the joy and the peace, the light and the life of the Holy Ghost. They are lost in the fulness of infinite and immeasurable love; and by one single act of love which never ends, and of which we cannot, here below, even comprehend the perfection and the rapture, they adore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; they praise Him, and bless Him through Jesus Christ, who is their heavenly King, and the principle of their happiness.

The number of the angels is incalculable. There are seven principal, as we learn from the Archangel Raphael when he revealed himself to his dear Tobias—"I am," he said, "the Angel Raphael, one of seven who stand before the throne of God." The "throne of God" is the sacred humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, present in heaven, and also upon earth in the Blessed Sacrament, and which these seven great archangels, princes of the heavenly army, continually adore. These same seven archangels preside over the six days of creation and the seventh, which is the day of grace; over the six days of the week and the Sunday; over the seven sacraments of the Church; over the diffusion among men of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; and lastly, over the seven great epochs of the life of the world, from the creation of Adam until the final judgment.

The angels are divided into nine choirs and into three great orders, which we call hierarchies (viz., holy powers). To each of these choirs belong special attributes, which it would take too long to enumerate here; but it is very consoling to know that all, without any exception, for such is the express teaching of the Gospel, are employed in the great work of our salvation. "Are they not all ministering spirits," said St. Paul, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" In this sense, we are more than the angels, since they are for us, and we are not for

them. Oh, how noble a work of God is the baptized Christian in whom Jesus Christ constantly dwells, and who is thus helped and served and loved by the angels. Among these holy angels, who are all our friends and ministering spirits, there is, however, one whom we should more especially love, because in the day of our baptism, and in other still more solemn circumstances of our life, he is given to us as our special protector, guide, defender, and friend. He it is whom we call our angel-guardian.

All lawful superiors, whether spiritual or temporal, receive from God, who has thus raised them in dignity above other men, angel-guardians of a superior hierarchy, who assist them more efficaciously. Thus the most sacred humanity of the Saviour, and thus the Holy Virgin, Mother and tabernacle of God, had as guardians and assistants the seven great seraphims of who we have been speaking. There is every reason to believe that Adam in the terrestrial paradise, and afterward Abel, and Seth, and each of the five patriarchs who were with Noah, Abraham, David, Mary, and Joseph, ancestors of the Saviour, had as their angel guardian the most holy Archangel Michael, prince of the angels, and that this same seraphim is still the angel-guardian of each sovereign Pontiff, Head of the Church upon earth, even from St. Peter until the last Pope who shall govern the Church at the second coming of Our Lord; also that bishops and Christian kings have as guardians celestial spirits, high in dignity; the same may be said, in a more carefully guarded degree, of priests and of superiors in general. Each diocese and each empire has for its angel-guardian one of the princes of the heavens; each parish, each church has equally its angel; even the graves which receive our mortal bodies have their protector and celestial guardians, as the Church declares in her liturgy.

The saints are men who, during their pilgrimage in this world, so faithfully corresponded to the graces of Jesus Christ, to the teaching of His Church, and to the assistance of the holy angels, that after their death they have obtained the mercy of God, and have taken their place, each according to his merits and degree of holiness, in the glorious hierarchies of paradise.

Thus there are in heaven saints who are superior to many of the angels in glory, happiness, perfection, and power. Thus the Blessed Virgin, though a simple woman, and a human creature, is so far above all cherubim and seraphim that she alone constitutes in heaven an Order—a separate hierarchy.

Among the saints of the Old Testament, Abraham, the great ser-

vant of God, Moses, David, and St. John the Baptist must possess in the courts of heaven a most exalted dignity; and among the saints of the New, who could say to what an incomparable height of glory a St. Joseph, a St. Peter, a St. Paul, and a St. John have attained? and, in times nearer to our own, a St. Benedict, a St. Francis of Assisi, a St. Dominic, a St. Catherine of Sienna, a St. Theresa, a St. Ignatius, a St. Charles Borromeo, a St. Francis of Sales? Ah! how great our happiness to see these shining stars, these glorious saints whom we have loved and revered on earth, in that day when we ourselves shall enter heaven to take a lowly place among the saints. How great the love that they will have for us, that we shall have for them, in paradise. Let us then strive, while we have still the power to merit, to labor constantly for our own sanctification, and never to wander from the narrow way which leads to heaven.

Let us advance in the practice of all Christian virtues, remembering that in this road we must either go forward or go back; let us advance in the spirit of faith, in the constant recollection of the presence of God, in constant union with Jesus our dear Saviour, who reposes in the faithful heart, in a courageous practice of penance, prayer, detachment, humility, and gentleness of work, and patience and obedience and chastity; let us very often approach the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist; and living in the sight of God, and under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, let us be true and fervent Christians upon earth, that we may be hereafter saints in heaven.

The feast of All Saints, which is celebrated on the first of November, is intended to recall to our minds what awaits us after life, to induce us to celebrate with holy joy the victories and the blessedness of the saints, to cause us to invoke them with greater earnestness, and to draw down upon us by these means, through their powerful intercession, very abundant graces and special benedictions. This festival also enables us to honor and venerate with religious rites that innumerable multitude of holy souls who are in heaven, but who are not canonized by the Church—that is to say, who have not been officially declared holy by the supreme authority of the Pope, and who (but for this beautiful feast of All Saints) would not receive from the Church upon earth that honor to which they have a right.

All Saints will be one day *our* festival—yes, even ours, though saints of lowliest degree, who are not canonizable, and who never will be canonized.

THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

ON the 2d of November the Church celebrates a feast which is at the same time most solemn and most touching. This is the commemoration (or remembrance) of the faithful departed.

This feast does not concern the souls of all those who have gone before us on this earth. Many are already in the enjoyment of the eternal rest of heaven, and their feast is celebrated the day before, on November 1st, the day of All Saints. These are the souls of those who, when their earthly probation was over, were found in a state of grace at the moment of death, and also of those whose purification from sin in the flames of purgatory is already ended. These holy souls have no further need of our suffrages. They can only receive our homage and our prayers; they have for ever entered into joy and into perfect gladness. . . .

There are other souls, alas! and in great numbers, with whom this sacred commemoration has no connection: these are the souls of those who are eternally and irrevocably condemned to the torments of hell because they rejected God, and separated themselves from His love, during that time when they were able to choose between good and evil, between the love of God and the love of sin. There is no feast, there are no prayers for them, neither in the Church which is still militant on earth, nor in the Church which already reigns in heaven. For them there is nothing but an eternal remorse, an eternal despair, an eternal void, nothing but these eternally revenging flames, which devour without consuming—those flames of which Jesus Christ speaks so often in His Gospel as the certain doom of sinners. "They shall be cast," He says, "into everlasting fire, into the fire which is not extinguished, where the victims shall be salted with fire [that is to say, preserved and yet penetrated], and where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. . . ."

The feast of All Souls relates, therefore, to the souls in purgatory alone. Purgatory is a state of suffering in which those souls who were found at the time of death in a state of grace, but who had not sufficiently expiated their sins by repentance, are perfectly purified that they may be worthy to appear among the saints.

Purgatory is that formidable future in which we are destined to pay all that we owe to divine justice. Purgatory presents the darkness and the desolation, the grief and the remorse of hell. There is the same terrible fire, there are the same torments; everything is

the same save despair and eternity. The same fire torments the lost souls in hell and the penitent souls in purgatory; and St. Augustine, summing up the tradition of the Church of the first four centuries, says, that "the same fire which consumes the chaff [viz., the reprobate] refines the gold," viz., those just souls who have left this world without having done penance in sufficient proportion to the number and gravity of their sins.

Therefore they burn, these afflicted souls; they burn in an actual although a supernatural fire, in a fire which has as complete access to the undying spirit as the fires of earth to the human body. The justice of God gives to this cleansing fire an activity which we cannot conceive, and of which the intense ardor of the fire that acts upon our senses is but a feeble symbol.

These souls are in outer darkness, like the souls of the lost. They know not the time when their expiation will be ended. . . . Perhaps not for twenty years—a hundred years! perhaps not until the end of the world! . . . Terrible perhaps! how greatly it must add to the pain of this punishment! but also how clearly it should cause us to realize the greatness and the enormity of sin, even of trivial, venial sin, since the God of everlasting love exacts for it from the creatures who love Him, and whom He Himself loves, so terrible a punishment.

But the greatest suffering of the souls in purgatory lies in their separation from God, from Jesus, their much-beloved Saviour. Here on earth the desire and love of the supreme good, the aspiration of the soul to God, its only, last, and infinitely lovely end, are incessantly weakened, counteracted, and sometimes even extinguished by the cares of life; but after death the Christian soul, plunged into purgatory, disengaged from the body, disentangled from all creatures which obscured its vision, aspires to God alone, desiring nothing beyond the one immeasurable good, now become the sole object of its love. It has one only impulse, and tends alone to God. But, by reason of the lingering stains of sin, this unhappy soul, repulsed from the sole object of its love, still languishes in grief and desolation. It is assured that it will one day possess this infinite good which it desires with all its strength, and it is this future happiness which causes its actual suffering. Such are the souls in purgatory; such are the souls of many of those whom we have loved, and who have loved us on earth—our father, mother, brothers, sisters, and our best-loved friends. . . . Shall we forsake them when we can help to deliver them from such suffering? Shall we be deaf to their

prayers and indifferent to their tears? They call to us from out the abyss of pain, "My child, my father, my friend—oh! thou whom I have loved so much, and who, in days gone by, returned me love for love, wilt thou so soon forget me, and withhold the prayers which would hasten my deliverance from this pain?"

Hard indeed must be the heart which can resist this cry. We will listen to their prayers. We will hasten to their aid. Let us hear the merciful voice of the Church, our mother, teaching us that we are able and are bound to help them by our prayers, by our good works, by our alms, and by our penances, but especially by the oblation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for their eternal repose. God our Father and theirs deigns to apply to them, and to pass on to their account, all the expiatory merits of these holy works.

Lastly, a very powerful means for the deliverance of the suffering souls in purgatory lies in the indulgences which we may gain for their intention, and which we are authorized by the Church to apply to their relief.

There are most powerful motives to urge us to pray thus for the dead: 1st, If we forget them, God, by a just judgment, will permit that we shall be forgotten by them in our turn, and no one will pray for us after death. 2d, There are among them a great number to whom we have been united by the bonds of blood and friendship. We must not cease to show them love if we would prove our gratitude. 3d, If we are so happy as to accomplish their deliverance they never forget so great a benefit, and will become our most fervent intercessors near to Jesus Christ. Perhaps it will be through their prayers we shall be saved. Let us pray much—and often for the souls in purgatory.

Let us often have the Holy Sacrifice offered for their deliverance. It is the best possible alms. Let us every day apply to them some indulgence.

The following are some of the simplest prayers to say, and have been enriched by the sovereign pontiffs with indulgences applicable to the souls in purgatory.

1. Seven years and seven quarantines (of days) to all who recite with devotion the three acts of faith, hope, and charity.
2. Three hundred days' indulgence for reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.
3. Idem, for the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus.
4. Idem, for the prayer: Remember, O most holy pious Virgin Mary, etc.; or, Memorare, etc.

5. For chaplets enriched by indulgences (viz., those of St. Bridget), a hundred days' indulgence for each Pater and Ave, and a plenary indulgence once a month, and on all the great feasts of the year, for the faithful who recite these chaplets every day.
6. One year, each time, for kissing a crucifix that has been blessed.

THE JUDGMENT.

WE are all eager to know the future. It is this common desire which has given rise to so many ignorant abuses, to a foolish belief in sorcerers, fortune-tellers, spiritualists, and other impostors of this description, who laugh at the credulous people who consult them, who take their money, and do not tell them what they desire to know, for the simple reason that they are quite incapable of doing so. God alone knows the future; that which will be is ever present to His infinite knowledge, even as that which has been, and that which is; and if we know for certain any single fact of our hereafter, it is only because God Himself has deigned to make it clear.

God has been pleased to reveal to us something of this hidden future, not to satisfy our vain curiosity, but to incite us to do right, to avoid sin, and to embrace with faith and fortitude the painful sacrifices which an unfaltering obedience to the divine law will often and necessarily impose upon us.

Of all these revealed truths, the most impressive, the one which does and which should affect us the most deeply, is undoubtedly the prediction of the Last Judgment.

We shall all be judged; nothing is more certain; it is God Himself, it is Jesus Christ Our Lord become man for our salvation, who has unmistakably declared it; and He has not merely declared that the world would be judged, that this judgment would be for all, and that it would be fearful and terrible, but He has deigned to give a minute description which should serve to stamp its reality more forcibly upon the mind. He it is who said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away. I am the truth. He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Nothing, therefore, is more certain than that Jesus Christ the Son of God clearly foretold the judgment.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, Our Lord, after He had portrayed the signs which were to be the forerunners of the second Advent (pestilence, wars, the confusion of the elements, the frightful overthrow of nature, the ravages of Anti-

christ, and the terrible struggles of His Church against the wicked), went on to describe how the clouds of heaven should be rent asunder, and how He Himself should come in all the glory of His majesty to judge the world.

All men then living shall be struck with death; but in a little time, at the supernatural sound of the trump of the Archangel, they shall rise from the dead with all the human generations which have passed from the earth since Adam and Eve, even to the last day. All shall rise again with their bodies of flesh and bone; the souls shall be reunited to the bodies which they formerly animated. The omnipotence of Him who brought all things forth from nothing shall allot to each human body which He calls from the dust of the grave that soul which was its former inhabitant. Then, gathered together before the tribunal of their divine Judge, men shall submit to their eternal sentence; to the just, a sentence of eternal life, to eternal happiness, of everlasting joy; to the wicked, a sentence of eternal despair, of hopeless malediction, of undying pain, and everlasting retribution. At a sign from the Son of God, the angels, clothed with visible forms, shall separate this immense gathering of all the nations into two great divisions; one shall be on the right hand of Jesus Christ, and the other on the left. And then the eternal King shall pronounce this twofold sentence, "*Venite: benedicti Patris Mei, possidete paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi*"—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And the elect, to whom this heavenly invitation shall be given, shall enter immediately with the holy angels into the ineffable joy of their Lord.

Then the King shall turn to that other division of this vast human assembly, which, gathered on His left hand, still awaits the inexorable sentence: "*Recedite a Me, maledicti, in ignem æternum*"—"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." "And these," says the holy Gospel, "shall go at once into everlasting punishment." As the sudden falling of a thunderbolt shall be the utterance of this sentence to the miserable beings whom it shall strike and overwhelm. "Lord! banished from thy presence, Lord! banished from thee! Thou who art the Life, the Light, and the one eternal Good! and where, then, shall we go, where wilt Thou send us, Lord, and where shall we find refuge?" *In ignem.*—In fire, in everlasting fire. *In ignem æternum.*—In flames that shall never be quenched. In fires that shall never grow cold! Never! For ever! Alas, this dwelling-place! Alas, this terrible futurity!

But now no power can save them from the hands of divine Justice. The time of mercy is for ever passed; nothing more remains but Justice—inflexible, immutable, and divine.

“If men only knew the judgments of God,” said a holy hermit, when dying at the end of twelve years spent in sanctifying and incessant meditation on the divine judgments—“if men only knew the judgments of God, they would never sin!” Why do we not think of this salutary truth? It could not fail to transform our lives; and however negligent we may be, or perhaps even wicked and worthless, it would change us into true and earnest Christians, into men ruled by the golden principles of duty, faith, and conscience.

Sometimes we say, “It is too hard; I cannot.” But can we live in a devouring fire, and dwell in everlasting burning? Ah! how clearly we shall then see that we could have done the right; and that for the work we deemed so hard we needed nothing but a little courage and a little resolution. But then the time will be forever lost. Men die but once, and the judgment which follows after death is beyond appeal.

And how do we now defend ourselves? “I have no time to pray—I cannot find time to go to confession—I do not like to present myself at the holy altar before the eyes of men”—all miserable delusions paving the way to eternal ruin. Delay no longer, but return at once to God, and embrace a holy Christian life. Believe me, there is no time to hesitate. Use well the fleeting hours which separate you from judgment. You cannot tell how few they may be. Prepare yourself by the practice of fervent prayer, by frequenting the sacraments, by hallowing the Sunday, by striving earnestly to do in all things the perfect will of God. Prepare yourself thus for a favorable sentence, and pray, I entreat you, to our heavenly Father, that neither you nor I, nor any that we love, may have one day to hear those terrible words which shall shake the whole earth: “*Discedite a Me, maledicti, in ignem æternum*”—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!”

LIFE ETERNAL.

THE Credo concludes with one short sentence, which is most profound, but is unfortunately very little understood. After having spoken of God, of the Trinity, of the divine Persons, of the mystery of creation, of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, of the Church, which unfolds to the whole world the mysteries of Redemp-

tion, the Apostles added to the Credo the words, "I believe in the life everlasting;" and with these they have concluded. And there is, in truth, nothing beyond; and it is on this mysterious eternity that we must for a moment reflect.

We are accustomed to speak of the moment in which the human life of man draws to its close, consigning him to an immortal life in the bosom of God as his last end. Death—judgment—purgatory—a glorious eternity in paradise—a fearful eternity in hell: these are the grand realities which confront us when we speak of our last end.

There is no necessity for declaring that life ends with death. But what is death? what happens then? what is this terrible change? This soul, which only a few instants ago made use of all the organs of the body—to think, to see, to hear, to act—what is it doing? where is it gone? and if it is still living in some world into which we cannot penetrate, what is its fate, and what the destiny that awaits it? Great questions which religion alone can answer truly, because the God of eternity, Jesus Christ Our Lord, has revealed its hidden secrets.

Our life on earth is but a short and transitory preparation for the life everlasting. Death is the end of the journey. When we have arrived at the end of our probation, our Creator examines the manner in which we have passed it, and, in His infinite justice, He renders to each according to his works. He casts out of His presence those who have had no desire for His love; and He gives Himself, with the infinite treasure of His perfect holiness and happiness, to all who have loved and served Him faithfully, and who, while still on earth, lived in and with Him. At the moment of death, our soul will lose its power over our body, and turning to God, who dwells concealed within it, it will enter upon eternity in a changed and unalterable condition of either life or death, happiness or misery, holiness or damnation. An unalterable condition, because the soul has now no chance of changing; it can no longer, as on earth, turn from evil to good, or from good to evil, because to effect this change time is absolutely necessary, and in eternity time is not, nor any succession of moments. In this world, moments succeed to moments; and if we can pass from a state of sin to a state of grace, or from a state of grace to a state of sin, it is only because we have time to change. In eternity this is no longer the case; it is a different life, a different method of existence, which has no manner of resemblance to our life on earth; it is an entirely indivisible life without any succession of instants—a life similar to the life of God, for whom there is neither

past nor future, but one eternal, immutable, and perfect present, which passes human comprehension. In heaven, the life of the just is one eternal act of love and infinite beatitude; in hell, the life of the lost is one eternal and immutable act of malediction, fury, and despair. It is absolutely contrary to the very nature of eternity, good or evil, that it could change, whatever it may be; and for this reason, the happiness of heaven is an eternal happiness, and the damnation of hell an eternal damnation. And those who refuse to believe in eternal punishment argue falsely, and fail to grasp the true and inherent meaning of the words they use.

If at the moment of death our soul is united by love to God, through the grace of Jesus Christ—if it is in a state of grace, thus forever it must remain, and will consequently retain the possession of God, and of infinite happiness unto all eternity. If, on the contrary, which God forbid, it should be in a state of sin, separated from the love of Jesus Christ, and in fellowship with Satan, it must forever remain in separation from God, and necessarily in eternal separation from life and light, from happiness and holiness; it must remain under the power of Satan, since it has surrendered itself to him, and it must sink down with him into that unutterable darkness, that eternally living death (that avenging, immutable, and burning abyss of the infinite justice of God, that nameless and immeasurable malediction), which we call hell!

Between hell and paradise there is no middle way. Each one of us must be either saved or lost. If we are saved, we shall be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, and by our own co-operation with that grace; if we are lost, we shall be lost, in spite of all the efforts of God's love, by our wilful resistance to that love, and through our own fault.

Purgatory is a transitory expiation and enforced penance for those sins which the elect have not sufficiently expiated by a voluntary penance while on earth. Purgatory is, like hell, a state of remorse and suffering; but purgatory is only a temporal punishment, while hell is an eternal punishment.

But as regards heaven or paradise, no human tongue can even tell its secrets. It is the communication of the eternally glorious life of God, of His ineffable light, His immeasurable love, and His infinite beatitude, granted to the Christian for the sake of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

O God! how glorious the destiny that opens out before us. How foolish it is to think so little of the life beyond the grave; how gladly we should submit to all earthly trials if our faith were but more fervent.

❁ SECOND PART ❁

THE SACRAMENTS.

JESUS CHRIST Our Lord, the Son of God made man, chose and instituted certain outward signs to transmit His grace to men, and it is these outward signs that Christians call the sacraments. Just as God communicated Himself to us, in the mystery of the Incarnation, under a visible form, and by means of that sacred humanity to which He united His own divine Person, so He continues to unite Himself to our souls under visible forms, and by means of the holy sacraments.

The sacraments are the outward and visible part of religion; they answer the same end as the humanity of Jesus Christ in the Incarnation. They are to the Holy Spirit what the body is to the soul; the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, and is given to her by the sacraments: they are, therefore, the instruments or outward channels of God's grace, and are to the Church what the bark is to the tree. Jesus Christ instituted them as the necessary means of our sanctification. And, although they are only means, we are all obliged to have recourse to them in order to attain true holiness.

The sacraments, we have said, are outward signs. An outward sign is an external thing which can be grasped or apprehended by the senses, and which signifies some other thing which the senses cannot apprehend. Thus, if I clench my hand, and confront my neighbor, I make use of an outward sign. My gesture is outward, because it appeals to the sense of sight; and it is a sign, because it signifies something that cannot be seen, namely, the threat I would convey to my neighbor, and the resentment that I feel toward him.

All words are outward signs; they are outward, because in being heard they affect the sense of hearing; and they are signs, because the different sounds which they form express and signify our thoughts, which are invisible, and are hidden in the depths of the mind. The Christian sacraments are all outward signs; they may all be apprehended by one or other of the five senses; they consist

either of ceremonies, gestures, or words, or of material things, which signify and produce an invisible action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the faithful who have recourse to them.

There are seven sacraments, all instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They are—Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. They all convey to the soul the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, who comes in order to sanctify it in all the different conditions and various necessities of its spiritual life.

In Baptism, Jesus Christ gives us the Holy Spirit, that we may be born to spiritual and eternal life, and may thereby enter into the great family of the elect, which is the Catholic Church. The outward sign, which confers upon us the grace of baptism, is the action of the priest who pours water upon the head of the new Christian while pronouncing the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In Confirmation, Jesus Christ gives us His Holy Spirit to develop within us that life which He gave us in baptism, and to provide us with all the strength that we require in the many trials and combats of the Christian life; the outward sign which confers upon us the grace of confirmation is the action of the bishop who pronounces certain sacred words while anointing the foreheads of the faithful with the Holy Chrism.

In Holy Eucharist, Our Lord Jesus Christ gives Himself, with His humanity, His divinity, and the plenitude of His Spirit, and His abundant graces, under the appearance of bread and wine, constantly to feed and nourish the life of the soul, and to cause it to grow and increase in the midst of all the difficulties of our daily lives. The outward sign in Holy Eucharist is the true body of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of the bread and of the wine which hides His adorable Body.

In Penance Jesus Christ gives us the Holy Spirit, whom we have lost through sin, and thus enables us to rise anew to the Christian life. Just as the union of the body with the soul constitutes the life of the body, and just as this life is lost as soon as the soul is separated from the body, even so the union of the soul with the Holy Spirit of Jesus is spiritual and eternal life—the life of the soul; and this life is lost when sin separates the soul from the Holy Spirit, from Jesus, and from our heavenly Father. Penance is that means which the infinite mercy of God has provided to restore to us this life when we lose it after baptism. The outward sign, which confers

upon us the **grace** of the sacrament of penance, consists in the words spoken by the priest in giving absolution to the penitent who has just confessed his sins.

In Extreme Unction Jesus Christ sends us the Holy Spirit to purify us for the last time before we appear at His tribunal, and to sanctify our sufferings, our agony, and death. This is the last mark of His love, as Baptism is the first. When God sees it to be expedient for salvation, the Holy Spirit, by Extreme Unction, restores bodily health to the dying. The outward sign in this great sacrament is the oil with which the priest anoints the sick on all the organs of the senses while pronouncing certain prayers.

Holy Order, which is the sixth sacrament, is the outward sign by means of which Jesus Christ sends down the Holy Spirit upon those whom He deigns to elect from among His disciples to be His priests, namely, the dispensers of the sacraments, the ministers of religion, the preachers of the Gospel, and the pastors of the Christian people.

The outward sign by which the Holy Spirit comes to bestow this sacred dignity, and to shed His divine grace upon the soul of the Christian who is consecrated to the priestly office, is the imposition of the bishop's hands upon the head of him who is ordained, with many other affecting ceremonies, called by the general name of Ordination.

Lastly, in Matrimony, Our Lord, full of solicitude for our happiness and sanctification in every condition of life, gives to the husband and wife His Holy Spirit to constitute, authorize, and sanctify their union, to endue them with strength to preserve mutual fidelity and conjugal chastity, and to assist them in the many difficult duties which their common life and the education of their children will in future impose upon them.

The outward sign which confers the grace of this sacrament consists in certain ceremonial rites which constitute the alliance of the bride and bridegroom.

The seven sacraments of the Church are therefore outward signs instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ as the means of our sanctification. Two among them, Baptism and Penance, are destined to give the grace of God to those who have it not, and to those who have lost it. Baptism gives, and Penance restores, life to the soul. The five others, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Order, and Matrimony, neither give nor restore spiritual life, but they develop and increase it. It is therefore necessary to be in a state of grace—that is to say, not separated from God by any mortal

sin, in order to receive these sacraments worthily. If any one received knowingly either of these sacraments in a state of mortal sin, he would not only forfeit the grace bestowed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart, but would moreover commit a horrible sacrilege, and would trample underfoot the merits of Jesus Christ, from whom all the efficacy of the sacraments springs.

Woe unto him who commits the sin of sacrilege; woe to the unworthy Christian who dares to communicate, or to receive confirmation, or to be married in a state of mortal sin, without having first obtained the pardon of his sins by the means of a good confession! The Son of God shall return to him once more, at the day of judgment; and for that unhappy man the greatness of His mercy shall be forever obliterated in the greatness of His justice.

But, on the other hand, how great is the joy, how inexhaustible the source of consolation for the true Christian who beholds his God ever ready to assist him in all his weak endeavors. He can every day, and at any moment in his life, drink plentifully at these life-giving fountains, which are the sources of all grace, and whose "waters," said Our Lord Jesus Christ, "spring forth unto everlasting life."

BAPTISM.

THERE are, as we have just said, seven sacraments in the Christian religion — that is to say, there are seven rites or external signs chosen by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself to sanctify our souls, by transmitting to them the divine grace to supply our various spiritual requirements.

The life of the soul may be compared to the life of the body. In order to grow, to develop, to receive nourishment, and to accomplish all its functions, the body must first of all be filled with the breath of life. It is the same with the soul. It must first of all receive life by its union with Jesus Christ; and if it does not receive this life it can do no Christian deeds, nor attain true sanctification. Therefore, Baptism is that external ceremony which has been ordained by God to give life to the soul, and to enable us to be born of the spirit, and to become the children of God and of His Church. For this reason we call Baptism the first and most fundamental of the sacraments, without which no one can be a Christian, or have any part with Jesus Christ.

Baptism is given by taking water and pouring it upon the head of the man or child who presents himself to be made a Christian, while

pronouncing the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In order that the Baptism may be valid, the water used must be natural water, and the person who baptizes must pronounce the words just given at the same time that he pours the water.

In case of necessity, any one may, and should baptize, whether man, woman, or child is of no consequence; but only in a case of necessity, when the child is in imminent danger of death, and when there is no time to fetch a priest. Beyond this case of necessity, no one is permitted to administer the sacrament of Baptism; the priest being, by virtue of his sacred character, the dispenser of holy things and the minister of religion. Baptism is usually administered in churches, near the entrance, to signify that by baptism the child is admitted into the Church, namely, into the great company of Christians, servants of Jesus Christ, and children of God. Before pouring the water, and thus conferring the sacrament, the priest performs over the child many mystical ceremonies, and recites many prayers, of which the object is to implore for the new Christian the divine blessing, to drive away the devil, by whom he is separated from Jesus Christ through the stain of original sin, and symbolize the graces which Baptism is about to confer upon the soul. By the mouth of his godfather, or of his godmother, the child promises to God that he will be faithful to Him all his life, and that he will avoid sin to the utmost of his power; and he renounces the devil, vice, and evil works in order to embrace the service of Jesus Christ his Saviour. The godfather and godmother become even as the father and mother of the child in all that relates to the care of his soul, and are henceforth bound by a solemn duty to further his salvation by every means in their power. After the child has been baptized, the priest anoints him on the head with a consecrated oil called Holy Chrism, which is used only in the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Order.

The priest places in the hands of the newly made Christian, or rather in the hands of his godfather and godmother, a lighted taper, a striking symbol of what a Christian is, and always should be; for as the light consumes and absorbs the whole taper, causing it to pass away in light, so Jesus Christ becomes, in baptism, the life, the life-giving light of Christians, who are on earth only that they may be consumed in love for Him, and in entire devotion to His divine service. If they do but remain faithful, they shall hereafter be admitted into the eternal light and joy of Jesus Christ in heaven, even

like the taper, which, as it gradually consumes, becomes nothing else but light.

The day of our baptism is the day of our true birth—that is, of our birth to the true life. For we are not destined to live on earth even like sheep and oxen which have no souls, but are created for the life eternal—are created to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him with an undivided heart all through the probation of this mortal life, that we may thus reach our heavenly home, heirs to the happiness that knows no end.

We must faithfully keep the sacred promises of our baptism, and must take great care in causing them to be observed by those who depend upon us. Children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ, let us prove ourselves worthy of the grace bestowed on us in our baptism. To do this, we must avoid sin, fight against temptation, and be frequent in prayer; we must attend religious instructions (especially on Sundays and on festivals), and constantly observe the commandments of God and the laws of the Church. In one word, we must in all things strive to follow Christ. Earth has nothing more truly great and noble than the Christian whose life does no dishonor to the sacred name he bears.

CONFIRMATION.

BAPTISM is the first sacrament of the Christian religion; Confirmation is the second. Confirmation is, in respect to Baptism, just what the development of youth and manhood is to the simple birth. By birth we become men, but we are not men yet in every sense of the term—men capable of speaking, acting, working, and fighting. To become perfect men, we must grow and acquire strength, and gradually develop into manhood. So it is with the soul, of which the body is only the symbol and visible image. Our soul is spiritually united to Jesus Christ by baptism, and thus becomes a living soul in the sight of God. But the sacrament of Confirmation is needed to develop and bring to perfection the grace given in baptism, and to make the Christian a perfect Christian.

We do not mean by this that all those who are confirmed are perfect; alas! the devil and human weakness ever remain. But in Confirmation, the Christian receives from God all the strength he needs to become and to continue a perfect Christian—that is to say, a saint.

Our Lord gives us this assistance once for all, and for this reason

the sacrament of Confirmation is only received once during life. In the first ages of the Church, Confirmation was generally conferred immediately after baptism; but now it is the custom for children to receive it when they have reached the age of reason, or at least at the time of their first communion; since it is then that the passions first struggle for mastery, and that the true battle of life begins. To neglect wilfully to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the appointed time is to be guilty of a great sin; and it is as great a fault in a father or mother not to oblige their children to be confirmed, or still worse, to prevent them.

The bishops alone have received from Jesus Christ the power to confirm. By Confirmation we are, in fact, called to fight valiantly against the devil, the world, and the flesh; and it is the bishops who command the great army of our God. The priests are captains who fight under the orders of their general. In order to confirm, the bishop, wearing his pontifical vestments, commences by imploring for those who present themselves to him the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and recites certain ancient and admirable prayers. Then each one approaches in his turn, and the bishop traces with the Holy Chrism, upon the forehead of the Christian, the sign of the cross (which is the sign of the great victory won by Jesus Christ), and says, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Such is the sacramental formula transmitted by the Apostles to the bishops, their successors. The pontiff then gives the person confirmed a little blow on the cheek, saying, "Peace be with thee." When all have received the sacrament, the bishop concludes the ceremony by asking of God, for His new soldiers, grace to fight manfully with the weapons with which this sacrament has now supplied them; and he then bestows upon all present his solemn benediction. On the day of Confirmation any saint may be chosen as the patron of that new life in which his example and protection will help us to persevere, and we would strongly recommend all children to take the name of Mary, and thus place their perseverance in holiness under the special protection of the most holy and immaculate Virgin, the Mother of God.

You have doubtless been both baptized and confirmed. Fight courageously against the enemies of your salvation, who are also the enemies of your happiness. Practise all Christian duties with untiring energy; banish from your heart all weakness and baseness and human respect. Remember those striking words of our Saviour, so

consoling for the true Christian, so terrible for the unworthy—"He who shall be ashamed of Me before men, of him will I also be ashamed before My Father at the last day. He who perseveres unto the end shall be saved."

HOLY EUCHARIST.

HOLY EUCHARIST is the third sacrament of the Christian religion. If Baptism give life to the soul by uniting us spiritually to Jesus Christ, if Confirmation develop and complete this life-giving union, the Holy Eucharist is destined to preserve and nourish it.

Holy Eucharist is a sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, and contains our adorable Saviour Himself, under the appearances of bread and wine. The day before His Passion, Jesus Christ took bread into His sacred hands, blessed it, and changed it by His almighty power into His own Body and Blood. "Take," said He to His Apostles, "take and eat ye all of this; FOR THIS IS MY BODY." And when they had communicated, He took a chalice of wine, blessed it in the same manner, and changed it into His precious blood, saying, "Take and drink ye all of this; FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD, the blood of the new and eternal testament, which shall be shed for you and for many, to the remission of sins." Then He gave to His Apostles, who thus became the first priests, the command and the power to do what He Himself had done, to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. "And you," he added, "as often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me." Ever since that time, the Apostles, and their legitimate successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, have every day, when celebrating Mass, consecrated bread and wine; and it is this bread and wine, miraculously changed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord, that we call the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, or the Blessed Sacrament. To communicate is to receive the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, or, in other words, it is to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, really present, though hidden beneath the veils of the sacred Host. This Body is verily the same Body that was once upon this earth, but it is not under the same conditions. In the Holy Eucharist it is in a glorified condition, and is thus immeasurably removed from the grossness of the natural and earthly body. To make a good communion is to receive Jesus Christ with right dispositions; to make a bad communion is to receive Him with evil dispositions. The first, the noblest, holiest, and most sublime

action of which a creature is capable, for it is to unite one's self to God. The last is a terrible sacrilege, by which we betray Jesus Christ, like Judas, with a kiss.

In order to communicate well, it is necessary to be in a state of grace (that is, to have no mortal sin upon the conscience), to be firmly resolved to live as a good Christian, to avoid sin, and to serve God faithfully; and lastly, to prepare for Holy Communion by prayer, spiritual reading, and recollection of heart. It is necessary, moreover, to be fasting, that is, not to have eaten or drunk anything since midnight. This has been commanded by the Church out of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. Every one is obliged, under penalty of grievous sin, to receive the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year, at the festival of Easter; this is what people commonly call their Easter duties. To communicate for the first time is called making the first communion; the time for this great event is, according to custom, the age of eleven, twelve, or thirteen years.

We may compare the Holy Eucharist, which nourishes the life of the soul, to that material bread which nourishes the life of the body. Food is not life, but it supports life, and if men ceased to eat, they would surely die. In the same manner the Holy Eucharist does not give life to the soul, but it preserves and nourishes that life which it received in baptism. It sustains and cements our union with Jesus Christ, and, by giving us renewed strength for the daily warfare, becomes to us the assured means and certain warrant of our final perseverance. It is a good and holy custom to communicate often, every fortnight for instance, or even every Sunday, according to each one's spiritual condition, and the advice of his director.

The early Christians communicated every day. No one can communicate too often who communicates well, and all do this who have made a good and careful confession, and who have an earnest desire and a firm resolve to continue faithful to the service of God. There are so many wonderful things to be said of this great and most adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, which enfolds within itself all the love and all the mysteries of God; the little we have just said will suffice, I hope, to renew in each of us the desire to show to Jesus Christ, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, a still greater love and reverence and devotion than we have shown Him hitherto.

FIGURES PROPHEPIC OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

CHRIST, the eternal Son of God, appeared to the world, after forty centuries of longing expectation, through the mystery of His Incarnation. Returned to the bosom of His Father, after the thirty-three years of His life on earth, He still dwells among us, even unto the end of the world, through the no less adorable mystery of His sacramental presence. The Holy Eucharist does thus, in a manner, recapitulate and continue the mystery of the Incarnation from age to age. Even from the beginning of the world Jesus Christ desired that His patriarchs and prophets should have some knowledge of that Holy Eucharist which He would one day give to men, and with this object He instituted many signs and figures prophetic of this holy mystery.

The first of these was the tree of life planted by the Lord in the midst of Paradise. The earthly paradise itself represented the Catholic Church; the tree of life was a symbol of Christ, the centre of the Church and the eternal life of the faithful; the fruit of this mysterious tree was a figure of the Holy Eucharist, the bread of life, destined to preserve and strengthen our faith and holiness and love for God. Adam, in order to remain free from sin, was obliged to eat frequently of the fruit of the tree of life, just as we ourselves are obliged frequently to receive the Holy Eucharist in order to remain faithful to God and strong to resist Satan.

The second sign prophetic of the Eucharist was the sacrifice of Melchisedech and Abraham. Melchisedech, whom the Scriptures call the priest of the Most High, and king of Jerusalem, presented himself before the holy patriarch, and offered to God a singular sacrifice of bread and wine; after which he was seen no more. Melchisedech is a type of Christ, the King of heaven, coming to man through the Incarnation, and offering up for him, before His return to the heavenly Jerusalem, the sacrifice of the Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine. Abraham is the type of the true Christian, who, in the fulness of faith, adores Jesus Christ, the eternal Pontiff, the spotless Victim, the sacred Host, immolated upon Calvary for our redemption, and ever dwelling, out of love for us, hidden, in the silence of our tabernacles. The Paschal Lamb is another touching prophecy of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus is the Lamb of God, immolated on the cross for the sins of the whole world, and giving His own Body to be the food of Israel.

which represents the Church. By the sacrifice of the Mass Jesus renews upon our altars the sacrifice of the cross, and by the Holy Communion He applies to each individual Christian the fruits of His immolation.

But the most striking, perhaps, of all the types prophetic of the Holy Eucharist is the manna of the desert. This great miracle continued during forty years. Each year, for forty years, the people of God, to the number of more than two millions of men, received from heaven a miraculous food, a daily bread, symbol of the True Bread come down from heaven, and which is Jesus Christ Himself present in the Blessed Sacrament. The manna was kept in a golden vase in the ark of alliance, in the most holy place of the temple of Jerusalem; the Holy Eucharist is, in the same manner, preserved with love in our Churches, in the hidden places of our sanctuaries, a thousand times more sacred than the holy of holies of the ancient dispensation. Each day, at Mass, this heavenly Bread descends upon the earth, and each one among the faithful can, and should, go to receive it as his food, and to draw from it the necessary strength to bear with holy patience the fatigue of the journey and the weariness of the desert. Ah! what would the world be like if all Christians went in faith and love to receive communion every day? This earth would then be Paradise!

We might give many other figures of the Eucharist recorded in the sacred books; among others that mysterious bread, brought by an angel to the Prophet Elias, which supplied the man of God, after an uninterrupted journey of forty days and forty nights, with strength to reach Mount Horeb, where the glory of the Lord was revealed to him.

Jesus Christ our Saviour thus foreshadowed, during forty centuries, the most precious of all the gifts of His love, the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, which is the food of our souls, the support of our weakness, our joy, our strength, our true life, the pledge of our perseverance, and of our entrance into the glorious paradise which awaits us when our weary pilgrimage is ended.

INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST.

ON the evening of Holy Thursday Our Lord Jesus Christ first entered upon His Passion, by His institution of the divine Eucharist. He was in a large room in the town of Jerusalem, and He there celebrated the Last Supper with His twelve Apostles. In order to set

us an example of obedience, Jesus, with His disciples, fulfilled in all things the religious laws of Moses. Although the God of Moses, He obeyed in deep humility, thus taking from us all excuse for negligence in the performance of our religious duties. When He had eaten of the paschal lamb, He rose, took a basin filled with water, and having girded Himself with a towel, He knelt humbly before each of His Apostles, and washed their feet before He instituted the Blessed Sacrament. By this He desired to give us many lessons; He wished to teach us with what perfect purity of conscience we should approach the holy table; with what charity we should render one to another every possible service; and how even superiors should, for the love of God, abase themselves before their inferiors, and should be full of condescension, treating all men as their brethren. When the Lord had risen, He sat down again at the table, surrounded by His disciples. He took bread, and, blessing it, He lifted His eyes to heaven, and said to His Apostles, "Take and eat, for this is My Body;" then He took a chalice, filled it with wine, blessed it in like manner, and gave to His disciples, saying, "Take and drink, for this is My Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal testament, which shall be shed for you, to the remission of sins." And He added, "And you, as often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me."

By these all-powerful words, the Son of God, Creator of the world, changed the bread into His Body, and the wine into His Blood, and gave to His priests the power and the command to do what He had done, and thus to consecrate the Most Holy Eucharist. And this is what they do, day after day, at the altar, during the sacrifice of the Mass. By the power of God imparted to them, they change the bread and wine into the true Body and true Blood of Jesus Christ; so that in their hands, upon the altar, there remains only the simple appearance of bread and wine, concealing from our sight Jesus Christ Himself, there living and there present in all the fulness of the divine mysteries, and in the majesty of His eternal glory.

How can this be? This is the secret of God, as impenetrable to angels as to men. We only know that thus it truly is, and this knowledge is all-sufficient for us. We believe the Word of God, and such faith is the highest exercise of reason. The Eucharist is the mystery of faith. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

ON THE REAL PRESENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

THE Eucharist is a sacrament (viz., an outward sign), which contains Our Lord Jesus Christ living and concealed under the appearances of bread and wine.

The Church teaches us that the bread and wine are changed in the hands of the priest during Mass into the Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ. It is this mysterious bread, Jesus Christ Himself, that Christians call the Eucharist or the Blessed Sacrament. Behold! how deep a mystery! glorious, unfathomable, and divine! But are we perfectly sure that we are not mistaken? is it a certain fact that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament? yes, it is very certain, very sure, and we desire no other proof than the divine words of Jesus Himself.

The more impenetrable this mystery, the more implicit and absolute the faith required of us by the Son of God, so much the more distinct and unmistakable would have been the teaching that He gave us concerning it. And such that teaching is; and His words on the subject of the real presence are so perfectly plain, so clear and positive, that for three hundred years Protestants have turned and twisted in vain in a useless endeavor to evade the full force and meaning of words they cannot deny. The evidence remains, and overwhelms them.

Let them, for instance, open the Gospel. Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks twice of the Holy Eucharist; the first time to promise it, about a year before His death; the second time to institute it. The promise is related by the Apostle St. John, in the sixth chapter of his Gospel. Our Lord was by the Sea of Galilee. He had just miraculously fed five thousand persons with five loaves. Multiplied in the hands of the Apostles who distributed them to the people by the command of their Master, these miraculous loaves were a symbol and an acted prophecy of that living bread, far more mysterious, which these same Apostles, and the priests, their successors, should be one day charged to distribute to all Christian people. Overcome with admiration at the sight of this great miracle, they said among themselves, "This is of a truth the Messiah whom we look for." "Labor not," said the Lord to them, "for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man

will give you. This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He hath sent. But I have told you already; you have seen me, you have seen my miracles, and yet you do not believe." And when the Jews said to Him that Moses their father had formerly given them manna, a well-known miracle which had proved His divine mission, Jesus answered, "Amen, Amen. Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." Then the Jews began to murmur, as Protestants and unbelievers murmur still. But Jesus said to them, "Murmur not among yourselves. Amen, Amen. I say unto you, He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." Then the Jews began to murmur more loudly, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" And they would not believe. But Jesus Christ reaffirmed to them, with still greater power and decision, that He would give them bread which should be His own Body, and His own Blood—bread which should be Himself, and that all must eat this living bread who would be of the number of His disciples. And He did, in a manner, pledge Himself to a fulfilment of the words that He had spoken. "Amen, Amen. I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed: He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. This is the bread that came down from heaven. He that eateth this bread shall live forever." It was impossible to speak more clearly. And yet many who heard Him were still incredulous. "This saying is hard!" they cried; "who can believe it?" And they went away from Jesus just as Protestants go away from Him now, since they also refuse to believe in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic bread, and have allowed themselves to be separated from Him by Luther and Calvin, and others who have joined in the same mad and miserable rebellion. Jesus is not troubled by this defection. Although God has an infinite love for man, He has no need of him, and will never force his homage. Then Je

sus turned to His Apostles—"And you," He asked them sadly, "will you also go away?"

Then it was that St. Peter, throwing himself at His feet, gave heartfelt utterance to those words of faith, obedience, and love, which have ever since been echoed by the Church from generation to generation—"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God!"

Surely this is sufficient to convince all who love the truth and seek it with sincerity. Nevertheless, the words of Jesus Christ, when instituting the Holy Eucharist, are even more formal and distinct than the words with which He promised it.

When such an assertion has been made by Jesus Christ, it is hard to believe that Christians can dare to say that the body of Jesus Christ is not really present in the Eucharist. And yet this is what all Protestants venture to declare.

In Germany there is a striking demonstration of this truth. Our Lord is represented between Luther and Calvin, the two principal founders of Protestantism. Luther pretended that in the Blessed Sacrament there is both the substance of the Bread and the Body of Jesus Christ; Calvin, more daring and more honest, said that Jesus Christ is not there at all, and that the bread is only a symbol of His body. (As if a piece of bread could by any possibility be a symbol and a figure of a living body!) Each of the three here portrayed holds, therefore, in his hands the Eucharistic bread; and these are the different inscriptions which are placed under each: Under Calvin, we read—This is not my body, but only a symbol of my body. Under Luther—This is bread and my body. And under Our Lord—This is my body. Then beneath the three—Which is right? For my part, I take my stand amid the ranks of God, and proclaim boldly with the Catholic Church, assembled at the Council of Trent, "I believe and I know that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. Whoever believes otherwise is not a Christian!"

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

A FEW more words upon this divine subject, the source of all holiness, and the centre of the Christian religion.

From the time of the Apostles, Christians had always taught and believed that the Eucharist was the true Body of Jesus Christ,

hidden under the appearances of the consecrated host. Three hundred years ago, first in Germany, and then in Switzerland, and then in France, certain men sprung up in rebellion against the unanimous belief of fifteen centuries of Christianity, and declared, with unheard of presumption, that the whole of the Christian world had been hitherto deceived; that they themselves, and they alone, possessed a clearer light and truer knowledge than all the great doctors of Christian antiquity, and that the Holy Eucharist was not the Body of the Lord. They brought forward no proof, no reasonable argument, in support of their new doctrine. They asserted and believed it because such was their good pleasure; and men were to give credence to their teaching because such was their desire, and this they called liberty of thought.

But the sun does not cease to shine if a madman deny its existence; and no blasphemy will alter the divine institution. Outraged and disowned, mocked and crucified Jesus, on the day of His Passion, was no less the one true God; outraged and disowned, blasphemed and trampled under foot, the Blessed Sacrament is no less the adorable Body of the Lord.

Jesus is silent, enduring all things from the depths of the tabernacle, even as He was silent and enduring all things before Caiphas, before Herod, and upon the painful cross. "Come out from the tabernacle, come down from the altar, and we will believe in Thee"—so speak the unbelieving to Jesus veiled in the Blessed Sacrament. "Come down from the Cross if thou art the Son of God, the King of Israel, and we will believe in Thee," cried the blaspheming Pharisees beneath that cross on Calvary. The Protestant who refuses to believe in the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, only because it is a mystery which he cannot comprehend, and therefore chooses to reject, exactly resembles the Pharisee who refused to believe that Jesus was God, only because he could not comprehend how God could be made man.

The Apostles and the faithful disciples believed in the divinity of Jesus, although it was not outwardly revealed, only because Jesus affirmed with divine authority that He was truly God, and because He afterward supported His words by His miracles. Sons of the early Christians, we believe with them the infallible assertion of Jesus, whom we know to be the one true God, and when we hear Him say, "This is My Body," we humbly believe that, under the appearance of bread, there is really present the Body of Our Lord, the Body of God made man; we believe without understanding it, with-

out seeing it; and we are of the number of those whom Jesus Himself proclaimed blessed, when He said to St. Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

Good sense, far more than learned controversy, should in this case strike at the root of every difficulty. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, said, while presenting in peace and love the mysterious Host, "This is My Body." The Protestant says of this same sacred Host, "This is not the Body of Christ." Which should we believe? . . .

What, therefore, does the Catholic Church teach upon this point?

Since St. Peter and the Apostles, she has taught simply that which Jesus Christ Himself proclaimed at the Last Supper. She says that the Eucharist is the Body of Jesus Himself, true God and true man, continuing by this mystery of love to dwell among us, as a father in the midst of his family, as a king in the midst of his subjects, as the good shepherd in the midst of his flock. She teaches that the Eucharist is a divine and incomprehensible mystery, even as the mystery of the Incarnation is incomprehensible and divine. She condemns, even while she pities, those unhappy wanderers from her fold who prefer to rely upon the caprices of feeble human reason, rather than upon the immutable Word of God.

The first who committed the sin of sacrilege, by insulting the Holy Eucharist, was the traitor Judas; and it is said of this miserable man, "It had been better for him if he had not been born."

When we see all faith lost in the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, that mystery which reveals to us most practically the love of Jesus for our souls, we are inspired with the same feeling of sadness and pity which overflowed the heart of Jesus in the Garden of Olives, when He stood face to face with him who first despised the Holy Eucharist! . . . *Amice, ad quid venisti?*—Friend, whereto art thou come?

PENANCE.

THE sacrament of Penance is the medicine of the soul, and it is for this very reason that it is obnoxious to many. The soul, born in misery, by reason of original sin, and constantly drawn to evil by the power of Satan, sometimes succumbs in the constant struggle, loses grace by separating itself from Jesus Christ by sin, and would thus fall into despair, and into hell, were it not for the mercy of God. The sacrament of Penance is the greatest proof of this immeasurable mercy. Baptism unites us to Jesus Christ, and gives life

to the soul; Confirmation strengthens this union; Holy Eucharist preserves it; Penance restores it when it has been diminished or destroyed. It is diminished by venial sin, viz., sin of a less serious nature; it is destroyed by mortal sin. When we have been so unhappy as to sin grievously, we must not be discouraged, but must have recourse to that remedy which our dear Saviour has, in His loving-kindness, entrusted to the hands of His priests. This remedy is the sacrament of Penance—the pardon which the minister of Jesus Christ gives to the penitent sinner, in the name of God Himself, after the confession or acknowledgment which the sinner makes of all his faults. Jesus Christ instituted this great sacrament of mercy upon Easter Day, by saying to His Apostles, in whose midst He had just appeared, risen from the dead, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” Ever since that time, Christians have confessed their sins to the priests, successors of the Apostles, and have received absolution, or pardon, in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of His cross. Protestants object to confession, and say that it was not instituted by Jesus Christ. But the words of the Saviour are distinct and unmistakable, and for eighteen hundred years they have been understood and practised just as the Catholic Church understands and practises them to-day.

The true motive which causes men to reject confession is pride, which shrinks from the acknowledgment of wrong-doing, and an utter want of that spirit of faith which alone can discern the true evil of sin, and the great excellence of the state of grace. Alas! what bitter regret, and what eternal despair, shall be the portion of those who die in wilful rejection of the truth.

The sacrament of Penance is a judgment. The priest, the representative and minister of Jesus Christ, is the judge. Therefore he is seated as at a tribunal. The guilty person is his own accuser: he presents himself before his judge in the humble posture which is befitting for a sinner; kneeling, with uncovered head, he receives the blessing of the priest, who, although a judge, is also a father, ever ready to comfort and to guide, and then accuses himself of his sins, and excites himself to repentance. If the priest find him sufficiently well disposed, he remits his sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and imposes a penance—that is to say, some work of piety destined to satisfy the justice of God. If he do not find the soul sufficiently well disposed to

receive absolution, he simply gives his benediction to the penitent, telling him to return another time better prepared, in order to be absolved. It is the absolution which remits sin; without it, there is no sacrament of Penance, properly so-called; confession and repentance are only the necessary preparation.

It is well to know that the mercy of God will supply all that is wanting when we repent of our sins and desire to confess them, but are absolutely prevented, in a shipwreck for instance, or in battle, or on a journey, or by an unforeseen accident, when no priest is near, and we are threatened by danger of death. We must then have recourse with confidence to Jesus our dear Saviour, who loved us even to the death of the cross, and we must make heartfelt acts of contrition and love, and we must promise to God that we will go to confession as early as possible should we escape this peril; and then we have every reason to hope that our sins will be forgiven us. But for him who *can* confess, there is no other means of being restored to the grace of God; and no repentance can be efficacious without the sacrament of pardon instituted by Jesus Christ.

Every one is bound, under penalty of mortal sin, to go to confession at least once a year, and that at Easter; but it is far better to confess much more frequently. "*Plus on se lave, plus on est propre*," says the French proverb, which means—the more often we wash, the cleaner we shall be.

If you are not at peace with God, and still more, if your days of holiness and innocence are long since past, take courage, summon all your resolution, seek a priest, tell him that you desire to confess your sins, and that you trust that he will help you to shake off the bondage in which you have been held. Be assured that you will rejoice to have followed my advice.

THE TWO TRIBUNALS.

AMONG many Christian truths there is one which is revealed to us by reason, as well as by faith; and this is that we must all die and appear before God, who, being justice itself, cannot allow evil to go unpunished nor righteousness unrewarded. The thought of death and of the judgment of God is a terrible one for all, because we are all sinners, often great sinners; and even the best among us is, after all, only the least wicked. Therefore, what is there that a sinner should not fear at the hands of infinite justice?

The best of men have been known to tremble at the approach of

that supreme moment in which they must be judged, and upon which their whole eternity must depend. One of the richest and most distinguished officers in the court of the Roman emperors, Arsenus by name, renounced while still young all worldly advantages in order to serve God better, and to prepare himself solely for a favorable judgment. Nevertheless, when at the point of death, he was seen to weep and tremble. "How! my father," asked one of the religious who attended on him, "do you fear the judgments of God? Is it not for seventy years that you have done penance?" "Yes, my son," answered the holy old man; "yes, I tremble. What is all our righteousness in the presence of infinite justice? I fear that I may not have merited mercy. I hope, but I fear; I hope for the mercy of God, but I fear because of His justice."

If such have been the feelings of the greatest saints, what should ours be, poor miserable sinners, who, from our childhood, have committed a multitude of sins of every description, and have never done penance with all our heart? What shall we say when we come to appear before the tribunal of an infinitely holy God, when all our thoughts, and all our words, and all our actions, and all our omissions, shall rise up before our horror-stricken gaze, even as a thronging array of unanswerable accusers? All the years, all the hours, all the minutes of our life, forgotten by ourselves, but living and ever present in the sight of God, shall be themselves our sentence! . . . and woe to us if we are condemned! What, then, shall become of us? for we are all sinners, and before the tribunal of divine justice we can only be condemned—condemned eternally!

This inevitable conclusion would lead us to despair, if, besides this tribunal of inflexible justice, Jesus, the Saviour of the world, had not instituted upon earth another tribunal—a tribunal of mercy and hope. This also is the tribunal of God; but it is the tribunal, the judgment of our Redeemer. He leaves us free to choose between these two tribunals; and he who presents himself willingly to be judged on earth has the infallible promise of God Himself that he shall not be judged in eternity. You have known this tribunal of mercy from your childhood, for it is the tribunal of Penance. The judge chosen by Jesus Christ to pronounce sentence upon the sinner is the priest, the minister of God, and in nothing more than in this can we admire the tenderness of the Good Shepherd for His wandering sheep.

For who and what is the priest to whom Christ has entrusted the right to judge us? He is no sinless angel, but a man like to our-

selves, who knows by experience human weakness and misery, who has need himself of pardon and pity, and who has recourse himself to the ministry of another priest to obtain the remission of his sins. Can such a judge inspire us with terror, and are we not assured beforehand of his commiseration? And then we may choose from among many, and seek out the priest in whom we can feel the greatest confidence. If we were forced to travel a hundred leagues to save our soul, by reconciling ourselves to God, what would the transitory fatigues of a journey be, when contrasted with the happiness of eternity? But it is not so; the priest is even at our doors, ever ready, like his divine Master, to receive the penitent sinner. Do we not trample under foot all Christian feeling and every semblance of good sense, if we refuse to have recourse to so simple a remedy?

And even the shame of this acknowledgment almost entirely disappears, owing to the conditions of the judgment. The law of the most inviolable secrecy closes the lips of the priest, and death itself would not induce him to betray the trust. Blind hatred of religion, in union with the most absurd ignorance, has alone been able to produce, in journals and mischievous romances, lying accusations, which unfortunately succeed in imposing upon the credulous.

Not only is the judgment secret, but the accuser is no other than the sinner himself, who already knows his faults. We might even add that the priest, too, knows them before the hearing, for all men, alas! resemble each other, and, whatever the nature of our accusations, it is almost certain that our confessor has heard still worse. When the accusation is ended, the judge weighs the sentence; and if the accused sincerely repent, this sentence is infallibly a pardon. And then, how perfect the joy, how perfect the peace, in the heart of the pardoned and purified sinner! He is once more the friend of God; he has heard pronounced over his head that sentence of absolution which God engaged Himself to ratify in heaven when He said to His priests: "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven; and whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them!"

And lastly, there is still one other mark of the divine mercy in the institution of the tribunal of Penance, and that is, that we may gain absolution, not only once during the course of our life (which would be in itself a great mercy), but a hundred times, a thousand times, constantly. Even human weakness should no longer cause us fear, since—provided we sincerely repent of the past, and are earnest in

our good resolutions for the future—we are always assured of obtaining pardon and life. Let us then take courage, and return to God our Father; let us confess our sins to His minister with thankfulness and humility, and escape at any price the judgment of divine justice and the sentence of condemnation which hangs over our head. Since we cannot escape the tribunal of God, let us be so far friends to our own selves as to choose mercy rather than justice, confession rather than hell!

People do not as a rule like to confess. This is not hard to understand. People do not generally like medicine, as we have before remarked; and, since confession is the remedy for that great and universal malady which we call sin, it would be strange indeed if it were not bitter and disagreeable. Therefore, even after having convinced you of the divine institution of confession, after having convinced you, not only of its utility, but of its absolute necessity, in order to obtain the pardon of your sins, and to save your soul, I hear you murmuring, "Go to confession! That was all very well when I was a child, when I went to school; but now!"—

Well! and now? Is it possible that you have no soul now? Have you left your soul at school? If you stood in need of confession when you were young, when the warfare of your passions had scarcely begun, do you not stand far more in need of it, now that those passions have grown strong and violent? Does the soldier armed for action throw away his arms when the battle-hour arrives? The sole difference between the child and the man, with regard to confession, is that the man needs it more than the child.

Confession is necessary at every age, because at every age it is necessary to obey the law of God, promulgated by the Catholic Church. And the law of God commands every man, without exception, who is capable of sin, to go to confession. It is necessary at every age, because at all ages men can sin, and at all ages they may die; and confession alone is the divine remedy which cleanses from sin, and holds the soul in readiness to appear before God.

(But it is very disagreeable to go to confession!)

Alas! yes. We do not urge it as a means of amusement. Things that are good and useful are not always amusing. It is not amusing, as I have said, to take medicine when we are ill; and yet we take it in order to be cured. Duty is not, as a rule, amusing, but it is good, useful, necessary; and pleasure must at all times be subordinate to it.

Thus it is with confession. It is a remedy, and it is a duty—a

difficult duty, but most useful and indispensable; a disagreeable remedy, so much the more disagreeable, as it is the more necessary, but still a remedy, and as needful as it is efficacious.

And then, be just. Whose fault is it? Why do you sin? If you do not sin, if you had not given to your soul that mortal sickness which is sin, you would have had no need of this remedy, which is so unpleasant. You must pay the penalty of your own acts, my friend; and since you have sinned you must also confess.

(But I have been no worse than others.)

I do not say that you are worse than others; but that since you have sinned, just as others sin, you must also confess, just as others confess.

(But other people do not go to confession.)

So much the worse for them if they do not. They should go. Must you suffer yourself to die because others are so senseless? When you are ill you call in a doctor quickly, do you not? And yet some people refuse to do so, and die because of their negligence; they are wrong, and you are right in not following their example. And as for your soul, you will surely do at least as much for it as for your body. Others should confess, because the command of Jesus Christ is general.

(But I should scarcely have anything to say to the priest. I have neither robbed nor murdered. I am well known. I am an honest man.)

Well, you will not have to assert yourself to be an honest man, any more than of being a robber or a murderer! But you will accuse yourself of all besides; and there is much, be sure of it. You have neglected a thousand most important duties, beginning with all the duties of the Christian life. You have a thousand times broken that contract of alliance which you signed with God on the day of your baptism. Open the "Daily Companion" for a few moments, or even the Catechism, and in looking through the examination of conscience you will doubtless find that you are in possession of no trifling burden. You must lay it down, my friend! or you cannot enter paradise; you cannot even enter purgatory; and if you are discovered bearing such a burden you will certainly be lost. Those who guard the gates of heaven can never be deceived.

(But I do not know to whom I can go. I am not acquainted with any priest.)

But the parish priest is known to you?

(I do not like him; and besides, I should not care for my confessor to know me personally. He would have a bad opinion of me.)

Indeed! you who had scarcely anything to say! . . . And then, why do you dislike him? Is he not the minister of God, and your own spiritual father? Is he not the kindest and most devoted friend to the poor? Your repugnance is most unjust, and I entreat you to fight against it. But if you still find it is too strong, go to some other priest, to him in whom you can feel the greatest confidence. Choose from among those who have the greatest love for the poor. Thank God, good priests are not scarce among us.

Cast out from your mind, once for all, the idea that the confessor despises his penitents when they acknowledge serious faults. Nothing is so false as this supposition. The confessor is the messenger of mercy, and of pardon. He pities the sinner, he loves him, he consoles and encourages him, and pardons his sins in the name of Jesus Christ. The priest has too clear a knowledge of human weakness to despise any one.

(But I have sinned so deeply.)

Your sins are not so great as the mercy of God. God pardons everything to him who repents with his whole heart. And it is this same unlimited power of mercy which He has delegated to His priests. "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Go therefore to confession, my dear friend, if you are so unhappy as to have relinquished the practice of the law of God. Do not content yourself with being an honest man, for God is not contented with that, but requires you to be something more. Become a good Christian, a true Catholic. That is, after all, the way to live in peace, to be really happy, and to possess a tranquil and contented spirit. Blessed, says the Gospel, Blessed are the clean of heart!

THE SAFETY-VALVE.

A CERTAIN actress in a large town had a little girl of eleven or twelve years old. The mother, although entirely neglectful of her own religious duties, still remembered that she was a Catholic, and was desirous that her little girl should make her first communion, and that, too, in the best way possible. For this purpose she took her to the house of the Rev. Father M., one of the best and most charitable priests in the town. He received her with a kindness which made a vivid impression upon her, and it was arranged that in a few days the instructions should begin in the presence of the mother.

Shortly after this first interview, Father M., in returning from a visit to a sick person, passed down the street in which his little pupil lived. He rang at the door, and it was opened by a servant. The priest gave his name, and she requested him to come in, saying that her mistress had given her orders to ask the priest in every time that he might call.

The girl had taken this command literally; so she led the priest into the very room where her mistress was sitting at table with a number of her friends, all actors and actresses feasting merrily. The priest felt decidedly entrapped, and the guests also. He wished to retire at once, giving the mistake of the servant as his excuse; but the mistress of the house pressed him so strongly to remain for a short time, requesting him to do so in the name of the assembled company, and with such evident sincerity, that he felt compelled to remain, and to take a chair for a few moments. The little girl was at the table near to her mother, and by the side of another actress, who appeared to be about twenty-three or twenty-four years of age.

Now Father M. was an exceedingly good and clever man, and was not of the number of those who are afraid of sinners. He understood that at this table, and in the midst of so strange a company, there was some good to be done, and that Providence would not have led him here without any purpose. He therefore answered with the utmost civility to the friendly advances of which he was the object, and soon succeeded in gaining the sympathy of the guests. Finding it rather difficult to enter into conversation, he addressed himself to the little girl, and asked her if she were making a good preparation for her first communion. "Yes, Father, I am trying my best," answered the child; "but here is a lady," she added, pointing out the young actress who was sitting next to her, "who has something to tell you, only she is afraid." The actress blushed, and acknowledged, with a shade of embarrassment, that she was desirous of giving the little girl her white dress for her first communion. "That is a very good and kind thought," answered the priest; "but you might," he added gently, "do something better still, if you would but follow this little child in the fulfilment of religious duties." The actress blushed still more deeply. "Unfortunately, that is not possible," she said. "My profession is my only means of living, and it is one which interdicts the practice of religion; besides which, I have never made my first communion; and now I am too old." "We are never too old to return to God; and at your age it is never impossible to relinquish one profession, and to make choice of some other more in

accordance with the Christian life." "His reverence is right," said an actor, laughing. "You really had better go to confession." The actress made no answer, and the conversation soon became general. They questioned the priest on the subject of confession, and on the position of actors and actresses with regard to the Church. The talk was not free from the usual lively sallies and ready repartee, but no bitter or unpleasant words were spoken.

The dinner ended, all rose from the table. The windows of the room commanded an extensive view of a beautiful lake. A steamboat was just passing. "See, gentlemen," said the priest, "here is a very clear and simple illustration of the advantage of confession. You see this steamboat. A powerful force puts its machinery into motion, and causes it to advance rapidly; but this force would be, in itself, a danger, an unfailing principle of explosion and destruction, were it not for a certain contrivance which is termed the safety-valve. By means of this valve the surplus vapor is thrown off, and both boat and passengers are in safety. So it is with us all. We all possess certain powerful forces, which are our passions; for these forces, for these passions, we need a valve, an opening, without which we are lost. This valve is confession; it is that pure and holy confidence which God has given us for the consolation of our hearts and the purifying of our consciences. And further, we may remark, how in Protestant and in infidel countries, where confession is unknown, there is far more mental alienation, many more suicides, many more moral accidents, than in those countries where confession is the practice of the people." And the priest developed this theory both forcibly and scientifically, supporting his words by numerous examples.

When at last he rose to go, he left the whole company most pleasantly impressed by the kindness of his manner, and also by the culture of his mind. The young actress accompanied him to the door. "Follow the reverend father to the church," said one of the actors, "and make your confession at once; you would be all the better for it." "I do not deny it," answered the young woman seriously; "and I do not know what should prevent me." And going out with the priest, she followed him to the entrance door. When she was alone with him she began weeping bitterly. "You have saved me," she exclaimed in a voice tremulous with tears. "It was Providence which sent you to this house. I was quite hopeless. Only this evening I had madly resolved to plunge into the lake, and thus to put an end to all the miseries and troubles of my life. Only a few

days ago I was hissed on the stage, and I have no wish to act again. This morning I learned that the man to whom I was to have been married has engaged himself to another. I had no resources, no friend on earth, and I longed to die. But now I repent—I will confess my sins—I will confess at once.” The priest gently calmed the poor girl, and encouraged her in her good purpose. He added some few words of Christian counsel to those which he had spoken in the hearing of every one, and the young woman appointed a certain hour the next day in which she would come to confession.

Through an energetic determination, she became a good and fervent Christian. She has left the theatre, and has undertaken the care of her friend’s little girl, and now they are both comfortably settled in a large town, where they are able to gain a livelihood in a modest but honorable position.

To all who read this, and who do not practise their Christian duties, I would say, as Our Lord said in His Gospel, “Go, and do the same!”

PASTOR ATGER, AND CONFESSION.

IN June, 1858, I was constantly meeting at Paris a very worthy man named Francis Atger; he was about forty-five years of age, and had exercised for twenty years the profession of a Protestant pastor. He had been for some time pastor at Pont-de-Montvert, in the Cevennes. He was a clever man, upright and honorable, and sincerely religious. For a long time his different colleagues had been in the habit of laughing at his sympathy with Catholic institutions, and had given him the name of “the Canon.”

This poor man first wrote to me, and afterward spoke openly to me of his great uncertainty with regard to the truth and of his growing antipathy to the doctrinal anarchy of the various Protestant sects; and in the end he did not fail to recognize the only way which leads through truth to life. “My decision is made;—I am a Catholic,” he said, when leaving me. “I am going to arrange my family affairs, and then I will return with my two sons and my poor wife, if she consent to follow me.” He was never able to return; first his affairs, and afterward his health, detained him in the mountains, where he died some months ago. Notwithstanding the violent opposition which pursued him even up to his last moments, he was able, I have been informed, to confess to the venerable curé at Pont-de-Montvert, to abjure upon his death-bed the heresy of Calvin, and to

appear "having on a wedding garment" at the tribunal of the eternal Bridegroom of the Church.

He related to me, during the course of our discussions and confidential talks, the two following incidents, which had happened to himself and had helped to prove to him the religious excellence of confession:

"Some years ago," he said, "I was engaged in mission, and was riding to a little town at which I was to preach. I carried behind me at the horse's saddle a small portmanteau, which contained, among other things, a rather large sum of money—more than seven hundred francs. Some clever thief, by cutting the straps of this portmanteau, contrived to rob me with such dexterity that I have never been able to discover where or how it was done. A singular idea instantly presented itself to my mind. 'The country through which I am passing,' I thought, 'is chiefly Catholic; if the thief only happen to be a Catholic by birth, and should go sooner or later to confession, I have some hope of recovering my property.' I could scarcely refrain from laughing at myself for building upon such a wild probability, and yet it often recurred to my mind. . . . A few weeks after the Paschal season, what was my surprise, and at the same time my thankfulness, to receive a letter from the priest of the place in which I had been robbed, informing me that I could recover at his house the exact sum which I had lost. 'Some one owes it to you,' he wrote, 'and I am charged to restore it.' Another time I was robbed in another village which was entirely Protestant. 'There is no hope for me this time,' I said to my wife. 'There are no Catholics here,' and in fact my money never returned to me."

I received these curious details from the very lips of the pastor himself.

EXTREME UNCTION.

THIS name alone is sufficient to fill the mind with sad, although serious and salutary, thoughts. We must all one day die, and Extreme Unction is the sacrament of the dying. In order to receive it well when our last hour comes, we should have a clear knowledge of this great sacrament, and should rightly understand the object of its institution, and the marvellous effects which it is destined to work upon the soul. Death is not the end of all things, as some few people, with a certain anomalous order of intelligence, will venture to assert. Death is, on the contrary, the beginning of the true life, of

that unchanging and eternal life, for which our transient human life is but the preparation. There is a close analogy between our spiritual life on earth and the life of the little infant yet unborn; because, by union with its mother, the child possesses indeed the germ of life, and yet it does not live, properly speaking, until the moment of its birth, and of its entrance into this world. Such is the present life contrasted with the life eternal.

By our union with Jesus Christ we possess the germ of that holy and eternal life into which we shall soon enter, and the moment of our death will be the commencement of that glorious life for which God has created us. Death, therefore, is nothing but a birth, a transition, a day to be infinitely welcomed and desired, by all who are true Christians and true servants of God. But, alas! however holy our desires, we are still poor sinners, very weak, and very liable to err; and we might well be tempted to despair at the thought of the infinite holiness, and to shrink at the thought of the terrible judgment, of Jesus Christ our God. He who, while on earth, revealed Himself to us only as a God of mercy and compassion, instituted this sacrament of Extreme Unction, in order to calm and comfort our last moments, and to grant us one last union with our Saviour, who thus applies to us, by the ministry of the priest, the merits of His passion and His death.

Jesus Christ, our Judge, comes thus to us Himself to reassure, to cover us with His sacred Blood, and to prepare us, by this supreme sanctification, to appear at His tribunal. The secondary object of the sacrament of Extreme Unction is to restore health to the body, if a prolonged life be necessary to the salvation of the soul. It is the height of foolishness to be afraid of Extreme Unction, and to imagine that it can cause death to the sick. Christians never have such wrong ideas; but as soon as they are seized by dangerous sickness, they seek their safeguard, and ask themselves for that sacrament which Jesus Christ has instituted for them, being well assured that they will receive from it great blessings for the soul, and also, if it be the will of God, a power of healing for the body.

Extreme Unction is administered by means of holy oil, consecrated by the bishops on Holy Thursday, and called the Oil of the Infirm. Our Lord instituted this sacrament, just as He instituted all the rest; and the Apostle St. James, in an Epistle which he addressed to the early Christians, reminds them of this unction for the dying, and charges them to call in the priests to administer it in all cases of serious illness.

The priest first recites, over the sick person, some preparatory prayers; then he makes, with the holy oil, different unctions, in the form of a cross, upon the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the lips, the hands, and the feet of the sick person, saying, at each anointing, "May the Lord by this holy anointing, and by His own most tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sin thou hast committed by thy sight, hearing," or by the other senses. And Our Lord applies successively to the sick person, by the outward sign of these anointings, the merits of His life and of His death, and purifies each one of the senses of the dying. At the time of receiving Extreme Unction, it is the custom to receive also the Holy Viaticum—that is, to communicate for the last time. Holy Communion, when received as Viaticum, is distinguished by this particular, that it is not necessary to be fasting to receive the Body of Jesus Christ.

After the Viaticum and Extreme Unction, the sick person should be left to commune in silence with God, or it would be even better to help him to profit by the two sacraments which he has just received, by suggesting to him from time to time some holy thought, and speaking some few simple words of prayer, such as these: "My God, how merciful Thou art, I love and thank Thee!—Jesus, my Saviour, all my hopes are in Thee, and I love Thee with my whole heart!—O holy Virgin Mary, Mother of my Saviour, I place myself under thy protection; pray for me, a sinner!"

And thus the Christian soul shall be at peace, happy and resigned, even in the midst of bodily pains; and thus the love of God shall transform the natural horrors of the last agony and death into a calm, sweet hope, a patient waiting for the life that lies beyond the portals of the grave.

THE FEAR OF EXTREME UNCTION.

CAN you imagine that there are in the world people so foolish as to believe that there is nothing so dangerous for a sick person as to allow him to see a priest—as if the priest were not the messenger of God, charged to comfort those who suffer, to pardon sins, to drive away remorse, and to restore to the soul the best and sweetest possessions humanity knows—peace and hope! Alas! how blind are the people to whom I speak, and they are not a few. For the body they spare nothing. They are not afraid of frightening the sick person by the doctor's frequent visits, or by serious consultations, although these things cannot fail to warn him that he is in danger;

and not only this, they do much more—they force upon him one remedy after another; they insist, they entreat, they weary him on the subject of his health; they spare no expense; they shrink from no difficulty, no suffering.

Now go and say to them: "Take care, your friend is growing suspicious; he is beginning to feel alarmed. You must be careful to create no painful impression upon his mind; it might possibly cause or hasten his death; wait until he is worse." How quickly they would answer that the first thing to be thought of was to save his life, and that that was the one thing they must endeavor to do even at the risk of frightening him and of doing him some temporary harm! And they would be perfectly and unquestionably right.

But for the unhappy soul it is a different matter; and yet it is often far more diseased than the body. Perhaps for many years it has abandoned its service to God, and forgotten its eternity.

The priest is the physician sent by Jesus Christ to secure and save it. And yet there seems to be but one fear, one dread—to see the priest approach the sick. It is delayed until the very last minute. "It would have such a dangerous effect upon him," they say. "To speak to any one so ill about confession and extreme unction is quite sufficient to kill him at once! We must wait until he is past feeling or knowing much about it—all in good time."

Very admirable prudence, indeed! Call in the doctor when the sick man is in the agony of death; call in the confessor when he is no longer able to confess; call in the priest when his presence is utterly useless. There is something to be done that would give you still less trouble; simply this—do not call in the priest at all, proclaim openly that you trouble yourselves neither about God nor about eternity; then let your dying die—like dogs!

What is the meaning of such unworthy conduct? What is the meaning of such cruelty, such irreligion? Could any words be sufficiently forcible to blight the fatal prejudice which has lost, still loses, and will again lose, so many miserable souls?

The experience of every day is sufficient to prove its falsity, but all this counts for nothing; the sick are constantly seen to weep for joy after having received the last consolations of religion, but still in vain; and still we see whole families, pretending to be Christians, join in a kind of league against the priest, to prevent him from saving the soul of a father, mother, child, or friend, and from preparing that soul to appear before the judgment seat of God! And then, when it is too late, and the priest justly reproaches the deluded

family, "He was so good!" they say. "He was such an upright, honorable man!" "She was such a virtuous woman!" "He led an irreproachable life!" "She loved her children so much!" "There is nothing to fear!" . . . And perhaps for ten or twenty years the unhappy dead had forgotten Jesus Christ, and neglected the most essential duties of the Christian life!

No, no; understand this, once for all, and tell it to the whole world: the dying, themselves, have no fear of the priest. His visit never kills them! On the contrary, it saves them! if they must die, it saves their soul! and if their sickness is not mortal, it comforts and strengthens them as nothing else could do.

This is our daily experience, and a thousand instances might be quoted to prove its truth. Some may remember the frightful accident that happened in 1842 on the railroad between Paris and Versailles. The passenger-train was overturned, and the whole of the carriages were shattered in pieces and dashed one upon another. A few instants after this terrible accident nothing was to be seen but a confused heap of broken carriages and mangled bodies, all drenched with the boiling water from the engine, and covered with burning coals which were rapidly reduced to ashes. In the first carriages some few persons alone escaped from this frightful disaster. These unfortunate people were dragged out with much difficulty from the midst of the burning rubbish. Five or six priests, professors and directors of the seminary of Issy, which is close to the railroad, passed the night in rendering the most devoted services to the victims. One among them related to me, how when the night was nearly over, and he was preparing to return to the seminary, a man came to inform him that a young pupil of the *École Polytechnique* had been just received into a large house which he pointed out, and had been so severely burnt that his life could not possibly be saved. The priest turned his steps immediately in the direction of this house. He requested the servants to say that he wished to speak to the master of the house. A lady instantly came forward to speak to him. He explained how he had just heard that she had had the charity to receive into her house one of the victims of that night's accident, and asked if there were any chance of saving his life. The lady hesitated, and made many difficulties, but the priest insisted: she acknowledged that the unfortunate youth appeared to be at the point of death; but added immediately that she could not take upon herself the responsibility of allowing him to see a priest, as it would be too great a shock, and might possibly kill him, etc., and all the

stereotyped excuses, exactly as we have described. But the priest, conscious only of a soul to be saved, urged his request with renewed energy, until at last the lady consented, with a very ill grace, to ask the youth if he desired to see a priest.

‘After a few moments he was requested to go in. “Scarcely had I appeared at the threshold of the door,” he said to me, “when I saw the poor youth raise himself with difficulty from his bed of suffering and stretch out his hand to me. I drew near. It was a horrible sight. He was so frightfully burnt, so terribly swollen and disfigured, that not a single feature could be distinguished. He was suffering a martyrdom of pain. The lady of the house had remarked the movement that he had made on first seeing me, and I could perceive that she herself and those who were assisting were very much surprised.

“‘My child,’ I said at once to the poor young man, without being in the least disturbed by the presence of those who were in the room, ‘I am come to receive your confession, to bring you the pardon of God, and peace to your soul.’ He clasped his hands with an indescribable expression of happiness. Although perfectly conscious, he was not able to speak. I sent every one away. I agreed with the unfortunate young man that he should press my hand in answer to the questions that I was about to ask him; and in this manner I received his confession. . . .

“When it was ended I recalled the mistress of the house, and those persons who were helping her in nursing the sufferer; and I then profited by this occasion to point out to them how culpable, and how utterly unfounded was the prejudice which had urged them to oppose my wishes; and they were unable to make any reply. I then sent for the holy viaticum and extreme unction. The dying youth received these last tokens of God’s mercy and love with a devotion which drew tears from all who witnessed it, and two hours after, his soul, reconciled to God, entered into eternity.”

Was the young soldier afraid of the priest? and were not those who repulsed him grievously mistaken?

One other fact. Nothing is so powerful as facts. On a certain Shrove Tuesday some years ago, I was myself called in to a sick child whose life had been given up by the physician. The poor mother had no hope. Those signs which are the constant forerunners of death were already stamped upon the face of her little one. I gave him the last sacraments, heard his confession, and administered to him, as viaticum, his first communion . . . his first and last, alas!

they said. The child lay with his little hands clasped together during this sad and touching ceremony, and when I asked him if he were happy, he exerted all his feeble strength to answer with a smile, "Yes, father, . . . very . . . happy." I comforted the poor mother to the best of my power, pressed a farewell kiss on the pallid forehead of the child, and left him, never hoping to see him again. . . .

The following day the doctor was surprised to find his patient still living. But what was his bewilderment, when, upon a closer examination, he discovered that the fever had entirely disappeared, as well as all the symptoms of death which he had noticed the day before. It was inexplicable. Three days after, the little one, recalled to life, was playing with his brother. Had extreme unction and holy viaticum caused the child to die?

Then dismiss from your mind, henceforth, these foolish prejudices, both on your own account and that of others. Do not fear the priest in sickness more than in health. When you are rather seriously ill, send for him at first; seek the consolations of religion, and try to induce all who are sick to do the same. Be in readiness for anything that may happen, and make your peace with God. Those who have procured a passport are not forced to start upon a journey.

HOLY ORDER.

HOLY ORDER is the sacrament instituted by the Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, for the consecration or ordination of priests.

Although you may not be a priest, it will not be useless to devote some few moments to speaking of the sacraments of Holy Order, and of the priesthood, to the end that you may have a truer knowledge of what your priests really are, and may feel how deeply you should reverence their sacred calling, and with how great a confidence you should seek from their holy ministry all the help you need to know and to practise the law of God, to live a Christian life, and to save your own soul.

Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Priest, that is to say, the Sovereign Mediator between God and man, and the Sovereign Sanctifier of the world. Jesus Christ came down to earth to teach men the knowledge of the one true God; to teach men religion, the one true religion, and to give them the means to avoid sin, to save their souls, and to attain to everlasting life.

Before leaving this world He chose twelve disciples, whom He

named Apostles, or envoys, and to them He communicated the great mission which He had received from His heavenly Father. "As the Father hath sent Me," He said to them, "I also send you. All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

The Apostles were therefore the first ministers of Jesus Christ. They, in their turn, consecrated other bishops and other priests in all those countries through which they journeyed preaching the Gospel; and thus our own bishops and priests descend, by an uninterrupted succession, from the Apostles and from Jesus Christ Himself, in whose power they likewise participate. And it is for this reason that we owe them an infinite reverence, since in their person we reverence Jesus Christ Himself. If sometimes they are not as perfect as their sacred vocation demands, we must remember that, although they are priests, they are still men, and are consequently subject to err like other men. By the grace of God, it is rare to see a priest fail grievously in his duties; and, as a rule, it is calumny alone which levels its attacks against the priesthood.

The sacrament of Holy Order, by which priests are ordained, is conferred by the Bishop alone. The Bishop is as the spiritual father of priests, and of all the faithful; and priests, who are in their turn the spiritual fathers of Christians, are like to the eldest sons of the Bishop.

Nothing is more solemn and more imposing than an ordination. This is the name given to that ceremony by which the Bishop confers the sacrament of Holy Order; the priesthood is not immediately attained; the Church, in her wisdom, requires many years of preparation from those who are destined to the sacred ministry. She initiates them little by little in the knowledge and the virtues of their holy calling, and requires them to pass through many grades, of which the diaconry and sub-diaconry are the principal.

Young men are sub-deacons only until the age of twenty-one, after which they are irrevocably engaged in the service of God by the vow of perpetual chastity. No one can be a priest until the age of twenty-four, nor a Bishop until thirty years of age.

The principal function of the priest is to pray to God in the name of all men, and to offer to Him the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which

is called the Mass. The breviary or divine office is that daily prayer to which all priests are bound, and which they recite, not only on their own account, but in the name of all Christians and of the whole world. Thence they draw that holiness, charity, and self-devotion which they need, in order to fulfil efficaciously the second of their duties, viz., the sanctification of souls. For it is to sanctify and to save men that priests, in the name of Jesus Christ, teach religion, make known to all the law of God, administer the sacraments, remit sins, and fulfil all other offices of the sacerdotal ministry. He that heareth them, heareth Jesus Christ; he that rejects them, rejects salvation and eternal life.

Let us pray to God to send us good priests. A good priest is like Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ the saviour and benefactor of all who approach him. The sacrament of Holy Order is thus useful to ourselves; and it is through this sacrament that we have the knowledge of God, and are able to practise His holy law, and that we are not deprived, like so many unhappy souls, of the light and the peace of the true religion.

THE PRIEST.

THERE is in the midst of us a man little appreciated, too often little loved, and sometimes frightfully calumniated, and yet who is, nevertheless, just the one man who is most worthy of the reverence and confidence of all. This man is the Christian priest—the consoler of all who suffer, and the friend of all the friendless; and it is against him that the scoffing and the irreligious, enemies of God and of society, constantly endeavor to prejudice the minds of men.

The priest is attacked in this manner only because he is the minister of God. The man who would have no God, would also have no priest; and, knowing that he is powerless to impose silence upon this inconvenient preacher of the divine law, he seeks to expel him, or at least to rob him of the confidence of men in order to paralyze his ministry.

The priest has been sent to his brethren by Jesus Christ, even as He himself was sent. "Even as My Father hath sent Me," said Jesus to the Apostles, His first priests, "I also send you!" Jesus was sent to save the world by the sacrifice of Himself, to enlighten it by His teaching, and to console it by His mercy. And thus He sends His priests to save, instruct, console, and sanctify their brethren; or rather, He Himself fulfils, by means of His priests,

His divine and beneficent mission, speaking by their mouth, and developing by their sacred ministry His divine life in the midst of men. Ministers of God though they are, priests are, however, men. Therefore they are not perfect. Still more, they can, if forgetful of their holy vocation, fall like the rest of us into serious faults; but their priestly character is no less worthy of our reverence; and we should always carefully distinguish between the man and the priest. Weakness and error are proper to man, and we must condemn them in the priest as in all other men; but the ministry of souls, the duty of teaching the law of God, the power of administering holy things, of celebrating Mass, of absolving from sin, in one word, the priesthood, are proper to the priest, as the representative of God, and are independent of the virtue or the negligence of him who holds this sacred trust. We should not forget that there was one Judas among the twelve Apostles; and when we reflect on human weakness, we have reason to thank God that there are so few priests forgetful of their duties and unworthy of their vocation.

Let men say what they please; there is one fact, which is perfectly apparent and perfectly undeniable. Our priests are, as a rule, notwithstanding the many imperfections imputed to them, and which are almost always greatly exaggerated, far better than other men. They are more charitable to the unfortunate, they lead a purer life—a more virtuous life, a life more in conformity with the law of God—than are the lives of those who surround them, and who often cry out most loudly against them. In fact, how can their life be defined if not as a life of self-devotion and of good works?

By teaching our children to fear God, to love Him, and to serve Him, do they not constitute themselves the most effectual, the only effectual, guardians of the innocence and virtue of our names? Where is the father or mother who could be unwilling for the priest to tell his child to be pure, to shrink from evil, to be dutiful and obedient, to fulfil his duties, and to pray to God—in one word, to be a Christian? Where is the man who could fear to have such counsel given to his wife? And is it not pure wickedness to call so salutary an influence intrigue, and scheming, and intermeddling in family secrets?

People sometimes complain that the priest lives like a gloomy recluse, shut out from society. But whose fault is this? Is it not the fault of society itself, which by listening to false insinuations builds up a wall of separation against the priest? And then, men of the world, so indulgent, so forbearing to themselves, when pronouncing

their strictures on the priest, become suddenly transformed into the most severe and rigorous of mankind. Let him do what he will, they are never at a loss for something to condemn. If he is genial, conversational, and at ease in society, they say he is fond of the world, and has mistaken his vocation; if, on the contrary, he is grave and reserved, they call him a bear, and pronounce him insufferable.

What is the minister of God to do in the midst of such extremes? He must do exactly what he does—he must patiently endure the foolish and contradictory accusations from which he has to suffer; he must do the right, as in the sight of God; he must give to the world the light of a pure example, and save the souls of men by a life of true self-sacrifice.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL VOCATION.

THE word vocation means simply calling. Those who are called by God to the ecclesiastical state have a vocation; those who are not called have no vocation, and should not become priests.

A vocation, as a rule, consists in the possession of certain qualities, dispositions, aptitudes, tastes, and inclinations, which render a man fit to follow one career rather than another. Thus men have vocations for the army, the navy, law, or commerce. All good and lawful vocations come from God, and lead to Him; they lead to Him because they are good; they come from Him because it is He who gives us, as our Creator, those dispositions, qualities, and lawful desires which, altogether, constitute our vocation.

Every man has a vocation here below; every man is destined to fill some place, more or less distinctive, in the midst of his fellow-men, and is destined, moreover, by a faithful fulfilment of the will of God in this place, to save his soul and attain to heaven. There are different vocations, just as there are different temperaments and constitutions. Those who would be well must first understand their constitution, and then take care of their health, which they feel that they need; just in the same way, those who would make the best of life should first discover and understand their particular vocation; hence, it is most important to study and examine seriously the groundwork of the individual mind and character. This study is one of the most binding duties of parents with regard to their children, and of priests toward the penitents whom they direct, and, lastly, it is the duty which we all owe to ourselves when we arrive at the age in

which we become truly responsible for our actions and for the whole course of our future lives.

To each particular vocation God attaches special graces, which are only bestowed on those who seek to learn and faithfully follow their vocation, which, consequently, becomes a duty of the highest importance, since it tends to eternal salvation.

The holiest, the noblest, the most divine of all vocations is the vocation to the priesthood. This truly consists of certain dispositions of the heart and mind, of certain qualities and inclinations which indicate that a child or a man will at some future day be fitted to fill worthily the priestly office. This vocation comes from God more directly than any other, since Our Lord alone, by the powerful attraction of His grace, can fill the heart of a young man with the earnest desire to consecrate himself to the divine service, and to embrace that holy routine of prayer, and sacrifice, and self-devotion which constitutes the life of the true priest.

As regards mental capabilities, it is necessary that a young man, to be truly called to the priesthood, should possess a clear judgment, upright and equitable principles, and an intelligence which is, at least, equal to the average; in short, he must be capable of earnest, persevering study. If a priest possess a large amount of talent and intellect, it is all the better, but that is only desirable, and not indispensable.

As regards disposition, it is necessary to be kind, compassionate, and capable of self-denial in order to become a priest. A priest without such virtues would be as a body without life, as a fire which gives no heat. A selfish, unamiable child, however bright and intelligent, is not fitted to be a priest.

As regards character, a very important point and one which is often overlooked, it is necessary that a young man who desires to become a priest should begin by vigorously fighting against, and effectually overcoming, certain grave defects of character which render even a virtuous man obnoxious to his neighbors. What future good is likely to be done in the priestly office by an irritable, capricious, or eccentric man, or by a weak, melancholy, indolent man; or, again, by a man who has only base and shallow ideas, and is utterly destitute of anything like real elevation of thought and feeling? or, lastly, by a heedless, thoughtless man, loquacious, fickle, and inconsistent. Such characteristics as these are little in accordance with the sacred garb and calling of the priest.

Mind, and heart, and character; such is the triple point of view

from which the idea of a religious vocation should, from the first, be regarded.

There are certain outward circumstances which should also be taken into account, because they are very important, and sometimes absolutely essential: among others, appearance, family, antecedents, and means.

Appearance; because, while it is not in the least necessary that a priest should be handsome, it is quite necessary that he should be neither ridiculous nor deformed. Therefore, even with sufficient means, a good disposition, and a faultless character, a child or a man who had a prominent hump, a grotesque figure, or any striking disfigurement, would be for that reason alone disqualified for the priesthood. Health is a serious obstacle only when it would prevent study, or render any one unable to perform the essential duties of the holy ministry. Family may also exclude a vocation: thus, a name justly dishonored, relations justly disgraced, form as a rule an almost invincible obstacle. It is the same with regard to antecedents; a liberated convict, a thief from a prison, may never dream of becoming a priest. If any one had been so unhappy as to lead a wicked life, and to give scandal, it would be quite necessary to efface the very memory of the past by years of penitence and by a holy Christian life, before daring to assume the robe of an ecclesiastic. And, lastly, means; pecuniary difficulties may be almost always overcome, if the vocation be, in all other respects, clear and unquestionable. Sometimes, however, extreme poverty may oblige a young man to renounce his desire for the priesthood, in order to support his family, and to provide himself with the simple necessities of life.

Those who have good reason to believe that they have a religious vocation should submit the decision of this grave question to the examination and the judgment of an enlightened confessor, and, except in very exceptional cases, the best thing to do is to render a willing obedience.

Parents should act with the greatest circumspection in regard to their children upon this subject of a vocation. There are two extremes to avoid—never to interfere with a real vocation, and never to urge a child indiscreetly into a life for which he is not intended. In either case they would be guilty of a great sin. They are certainly permitted, and indeed it is their duty, to give much thought to the vocation of their children, and to discuss it seriously with the priest who directs them, and to gain all possible help and security; but any definite decision on this subject is entirely beyond their

power, and it is the Church alone who can declare whether there is or is not a vocation.

Sometimes the evident signs of a vocation show themselves very early in life. There are priests who can never remember having had any other desire than that of consecrating themselves to the service of God. But in other cases, the divine call is not heard until later in life, at the time of the first communion, for instance, or upon the occasion of some great grief; or at the age of eighteen or twenty, in the midst of the pleasures of the world; or later still, and owing to apparently casual and trifling circumstances, which it would be impossible to enumerate, and of which the secret belongs to God alone. Usually, however, a vocation manifests itself in youth, or, at least, in early manhood.

A vocation may be lost: it should therefore be cultivated, preserved, developed, and strengthened with extreme vigilance. A blow from a stone or a stick is sometimes sufficient to break the branch of a fruit-tree, and to prevent it forever from following its vocation, which was to bear one day both flowers and fruit; thus we have seen dawning vocations, of a very decided nature, entirely disappear by reason of one single serious infidelity. At other times, strange and inexplicable as it is, we have seen vocations resist every shock and every possible blow; like plants which we are startled to find living beneath ruins which seem ready to stifle and crush out their life.

What should be done to preserve a vocation, and to strengthen it in the heart? To begin with, all manner of sin should be avoided as much as possible; also worldly pleasures, frivolous books, worthless and dissipated society; an endeavor should be made to live amid good influences and with those whose character and example would have only a salutary effect, to pray very much, to have much love for the Blessed Sacrament, which is the one central attraction in the life of the priest, to communicate as often as possible; and lastly, to work well in order to be admitted without too much delay into the seminary, that special asylum of vocations to the priesthood.

The confessor and the parents of a youthful candidate for the sacred ministry should endeavor to lead him in the safe and narrow way here pointed out by every means in their power.

It is a great happiness and grace for any family to give a priest to God. It is a higher honor than that of royalty; the priest is the king of souls, the true father of the people, the guardian of the truth and justice upon earth; anointed of God. Blessed is the child whom the Lord deigns to call to the priestly office. Blessed is the family of

the little elect. Let him choose without fear the better part. It is the most sublime, and the sweetest; it is the most Divine, and the simplest; thus, where responsibilities abound, graces also abound, and this vocation to a more perfect life is, essentially, only a vocation to a nobler, truer, purer happiness; it is the mark of a more tender love.

MATRIMONY.

MATRIMONY is a contract instituted by God from the beginning of the world, by which a man and woman give themselves freely and irrevocably to each other as husband and wife. Matrimony is therefore a sacred and a religious contract, and is of a far higher nature than any other contract common among men. It is irrevocable when a free consent has been once given upon both sides; it is beyond recall, and the union is for life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to sanctify the world in order to save it, did not forget marriage, the foundation of human society and the basis of family life. This contract, already holy and sacred, was raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. Therefore, among Christians, marriage is an essentially religious act, a source of grace and sanctification for the faithful husband and wife, and its violation is not only an injustice, but an undoubted sacrilege.

In the eyes of Christians and of the Church there is but one true and legitimate marriage, that which is contracted according to the law of God, in the presence of God's minister, and in obedience to the rules laid down by the Church.

A marriage, to be valid, must be contracted in the presence of the parish priest and of two witnesses. When the persons presenting themselves to be married have been interrogated by the priest as to their free and voluntary consent to take each other mutually for husband and wife, and have both answered in the affirmative, they are forever united, they have received the sacrament of matrimony, and commit a mortal sin if their hearts are not prepared for this solemn religious act.*

In order to receive this sacrament aright, it is necessary to prepare for it by prayer and by a good confession; and in many countries

* In England and the United States, the contracting of marriage otherwise than before the priest and two witnesses, though illicit and sinful is not necessarily invalid; for the Decree of the Council of Trent on Clandestine Marriages, not having been published in those countries, is, therefore, by virtue of a provision in the Decree itself, not binding upon persons living therein.

the faithful are not only exhorted, but are commanded to receive the holy communion before marriage. It is best to make this preparation in good time, and not to wait until the very day of marriage before fulfilling this important duty. In large towns where there are so many workmen who are both indifferent and ignorant with regard to religion, this culpable negligence is not uncommon; and if there are many miserable homes, it is greatly to this want of preparation that we must attribute the curse which seems to rest upon them.

Are you married? Make your home a happy one, and to do this be a Christian. Bear patiently with the faults and imperfections of your wife; and, wives, bear patiently with the imperfections of your husbands. Be sure that God reserves for you much joy and happiness in your union, and that He has raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament only to render it a source of grace and benediction. If He send you children, bring them up in the knowledge and practice of religion; teach them by example before teaching them by words, and live in such manner in their sight that you may never need to teach them to honor and to love you. Let your family be a model of order, peace, and virtue; this, believe me, is the surest and simplest means of acquiring lasting happiness.

In the Catholic Church the bond or tie of marriage cannot be dissolved; "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Spiritual authority can, for important reasons, allow a husband and wife to live separated from one another; but nevertheless they continue married people, even though the civil court should grant them a divorce. Neither of them can validly contract a second marriage while the other party is living.

There are two kinds of impediments that render marriage unlawful, or null. Marriage is made unlawful by entering into it during the forbidden times; or by having taken a vow of chastity, or by a promise of marriage to another, etc. Such marriages, however, while unlawful are not invalid. Marriages are rendered null, from the beginning, through relationship and kindred to the fourth degree inclusive, spiritual affinity, etc. A dispensation, however, in such cases, may be obtained from the bishop of the diocese.

For just and weighty reasons the Church disapproves of mixed marriages—that is, marriages contracted between Catholics and non-Catholics; and she permits them only under certain conditions, namely: That the Catholic party be allowed the free exercise of religion; and that all children born of the union be brought up in the Catholic faith. Mixed marriages are never contracted or blessed in

the Church. In case one party is not even baptized, this should be made known before, as it is an impediment that renders the marriage null.

BEFORE MARRIAGE.

It is a very serious thing to marry. To a great many people marriage resembles a kind of perpetual treadmill; they are in despair at the dreary prospect of being forever bound to one another; they tear their hair (figuratively speaking), and would give the whole world to be able to recall the fatal Yes, and to utter in its place a distinct and unhesitating No. . . . Vain regrets! this union is for life. Therefore, before entering into marriage, let us reflect very seriously on what we are about to do, that we may not prepare for ourselves, like so many others, a miserable future.

The following suggestions, if acted upon, are calculated to prevent many bitter awakenings: they bear chiefly upon three important questions. 1st, Shall I marry? 2d, Whom shall I marry? 3d, When I have chosen, how shall I prepare for marriage?

1st, Shall I marry? Do not deceive yourself. The marriage state is usually far more difficult, and far harder than that of celibacy. The unmarried are responsible only for their own acts, and there is no one to share the burden of their troubles, failures, and mistakes. Once married, this responsibility is extended to the husband or the wife, who usually finds this burden slightly insupportable. Besides, it is very difficult to find perfection in a husband or a wife; the education of each has been different, and their ideas are not the same; "*l'un aime le vinaigre, l'autre préfère l'huile*," from all of which spring tears, disputes, and constant discord. While unmarried, everything went smoothly; the daily requirement was simple enough, but now there are more expenses, and hardly more receipts, hence difficulties arise, and it is a question how to make the two ends meet.

In short, the state of marriage is a difficult one; it brings great duties and heavy burdens; it is a yoke which no one can shake off who has once submitted to it; all should reflect seriously before deciding to accept it, but it is a source of much happiness, and sometimes of salvation.

Supposing that I have answered this question, Shall I marry, with an affirmative, what is the next thing to be done?

Whom shall I marry? Ah! this is no trifling question! To

choose a husband, to choose a wife! Which is the prize in the lottery! If in a lottery we could always gain the prize, if we could but be sure of drawing the winning number, then lottery would be a very delightful thing; alas! it is so far from delightful that almost every one finds it a most ruinous affair. In that human lottery which we call marriage, men almost always lose, and they who chance upon the winning number may be regarded as phenomena. And why is this? The real cause lies in the carelessness and utter want of consideration that is shown by many when about to choose the man, or the woman, to whom they desire to unite the whole of their future destiny. In order to choose well, there are three things to be seriously considered. The person, family, and means.

The person. Is this young girl fitted for my wife, and will our union be productive of happiness? Is she good and sweet and unselfish? Does she possess the beauty of holiness, and the charm of Christian graces? Is she conscientious and well-informed? Has she been carefully brought up with simple, womanly tastes? Is she free from the too common bane of idleness and inactivity? Has she anything in her favor beyond the attractions of youth, and the girlish gayety which charms at first, but which is, after all, but as the sparkling of champagne?

How bitter an awakening follows after marriage, when a man has neglected to ask himself such questions as these. It often happens that he has chosen his wife for appearance only; he saw that she was attractive, and believed that she was perfect. . . . Alas! where is this perfection now? He finds himself tied forever to a nature utterly antagonistic to his own, to a discontented, passionate, self-willed woman, or to some foolish, brainless girl, who only dreams of dress and pleasure, or even to a dull and stupid woman, who will yet contrive to render him entirely miserable. The case is not a different one with regard to husbands; a girl will consent to marry a man only for the sake of a handsome face, a good figure, and a fund of agreeable conversation. Is he a Christian? Does he conscientiously fulfil his religious duties, the only surety for the fulfilment of all other duties? Is he a good son? Is he a man of pure morality and unblemished honor? Will his past life furnish a pledge for the future? But the heedless, thoughtless girl puts all such questions carelessly aside, in eagerness to plunge into those unknown waters which are hereafter destined to close relentlessly above her head. "But he is a Protestant!" exclaim her friends. "That is nothing; I will convert him." "But from his childhood he has neglected the

sacraments, and is in fact utterly without religion!" "Oh! when he is married, it will be quite different." "But he has led a very worthless life, and is reckless and extravagant!" "With me he will be quite reformed." "But he has a violent temper, and is indolent and very hard to please!" "Do not say any more; I love him, and intend to marry him." "Take your own course, then. In a year or two you will speak very differently."

Family.—Those who marry are forced to adopt, willingly or unwillingly, the family of their husband or their wife. Here also is a subject for consideration. It is quite necessary to consider whether you are about to enter into an honorable and a Christian family. Too often a shining varnish covers a bad picture; therefore it is well to be careful before forming any such close connection, and quite necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with everything concerning the family into which you desire to enter; there is nothing to be more carefully avoided than a connection with any family of ill-repute, or of a dishonored name, since such an association could scarcely fail to have a most baneful effect upon your own life, to poison the very springs of honor or of conscience, and to lower your own reputation. There are people who appear to marry only with a view to the father-in-law whose social position and influence will be most likely to form a stepping-stone in their own calling or career. In such cases it is the father-in-law whom they should marry, and not the daughter.

Means.—Here we behold the sinews of marriage still more than the sinews of war! Is it an uncommon custom to measure the worth of any young marriageable woman, or of certain young marrying men, by the value and extent of their fortune? She will have money, therefore she is a very desirable wife. He has scarcely any means, therefore I could not marry him. I know well that the question of money is one of real importance both in marriage and throughout life. I do not intend to say that no one should give it any thought: all I say is, that money is not sufficient, and that a Christian, a man who respects himself, is forbidden to marry a fortune, let its dimensions be what they may.

Money should never be regarded but as an accessory; and if there are certain trivial defects which may be passed over, no one should be willing to pass over any lack of the essential requirements of religion, good personal qualities, health, and a fair name. Those who find all these united may make a perfect marriage. This is the prize, the most rare prize, which all should seek to obtain.

But if, after all, you are bent upon marrying for the sake of fortune or of family, let me warn you that you will find it needful to be wise in your generation, for poor human nature is not always to be trusted, and the rapid progress of liberty of conscience leaves ever a wider and a wider margin. Your matrimonial prospects may appear most brilliant, your friends may esteem you a most enviable man, you may step with proud elation upon that matrimonial bridge, which appears to lead you straight to the earthly felicity on which your longing gaze is fixed as upon a veritable land of promise—and lo! the rotten timbers give way beneath your eager tread, and the golden apples you have barely clutched crumble to dust and ashes. You will therefore find it wise to take all the precautions I have suggested if you would escape making a lamentable choice; if you would escape being plunged into the waters of a matrimonial martyrdom, from which, looking over a dreary, weary waste, you will behold your distant Canaan fade, mirage-like, from view.

The third question:—I wish to marry, I have made my choice; what remains for me to do before pronouncing the irrevocable Yes? There is the religious preparation, that must be always made before receiving the sacrament of marriage and entering into that sacred contract of which the Church alone is the mistress and the guardian.

This religious preparation is of the highest importance for all who desire to receive a sacrament, and to receive it worthily. One or two weeks before the appointed day, it is necessary to go to confession in order to be prepared to receive absolution the day before the marriage. If any one dared to present themselves at the foot of the altar without having received this sacred absolution, they would commit a sacrilege, quite as serious, quite as fatal, as that of a bad first communion. An excellent practice, and one that cannot be too strongly recommended to the faithful who are preparing themselves for this holy contract, is to communicate together, side by side, on the day before their marriage.

Finally, it is the absolution of the priest, and that alone, which can give a clear conscience and purify the soul. Such are the preparations, such are the three different phases through which every child of Israel must pass who aspires to the promised land.

THE MARRIAGE DAY.

THE all-important day is then arrived. Israel stands by the shore of the matrimonial Jordan. Jordan, in Hebrew, signifies the river

of Eden, the river of gladness. What a happy augury! But unfortunately the Philistines are upon the other side. . . .

The dress and appearance of the bride and bridegroom are every thing that can be desired; all the bridesmaids are charming; immemorial custom proclaims it loudly; and neither are the grooms-men to be despised. Everything is rose-colored upon such a day as this! They enter the church, not to receive a simple benediction, as some appear to believe, but to contract marriage in the face of the Church and of her minister.

Every marriage must be celebrated by the parish priest alone. The presence of any other priest is not sufficient unless he have the consent and authority of the parish priest. This rule, laid down by the Church, is so absolute in those countries* where it prevails, that the marriage would be invalid if it were not observed; the Church also commands that those about to be married should be accompanied by many witnesses; two at least are necessary, and there should be a greater number.

It is the custom to hear Mass immediately after the ceremony of marriage, which is in itself very simple; the priest turns toward the bride and bridegroom, who are kneeling at the foot of the altar, the husband on the right, the wife on the left. After a short exhortation designed to prepare them to receive worthily the sacrament of marriage, and to remind them of the solemn duties which that sacrament is about to impose upon them, the priest asks successively of the man and of the woman, if they desire to take each other mutually for husband and wife, and both must answer in a clear and intelligible voice. Even then it is possible to say No—a thing which has sometimes been known; but as soon as both have pronounced the word Yes, they are married, married for life, indissolubly married, married until death. The blessing of the priest and the *conjungo* are only the official declaration of the marriage that has been contracted, and its promulgation in the name of the Church. It is therefore the mutual consent which forms the contract, and of which the sacrament of marriage may be said to consist.

If any one were to be married without being in a state of grace they would, I repeat, commit a sacrilege; they would receive a sacrament, but they would not receive the grace of the sacrament; they would be married, but this marriage, instead of being blessed by God, would be cursed from this very beginning. The special grace bestowed by this sacrament is the grace of sanctification, of

* See note, p. 139.

mutual love, of strength, and of purity, which accompanies the man and the woman through the whole course of their lives, and enables them to become holy amidst all the temptations which may possibly assail them.

During the interrogations of the priest, the bride and bridegroom, still kneeling, give the right hand to each other as a sign of union. Also as a sign and a perpetual remembrance of this union, the husband places on the finger of his wife a blessed ring, a ring which is the first link in that chain which death alone can break.

Toward the end of the Mass, between the Pater and the Communion, the celebrant gives a solemn benediction to the bride and bridegroom, who kneel beneath a white veil which is held for some instants over their heads; this veil symbolizes mutual cohabitation, and the blessing of the Church in this state of life. This custom is not everywhere observed; but the benediction forms a part of the Mass.

When everything is ended they enter the sacristy, and the priest, the bride and bridegroom, and the witnesses all sign the registration of the marriage. And now the wedding festivities commence, and should be observed with perfect moderation and propriety. While following the customs of the country, it is at the same time a matter of conscience for those who have been newly married and for their family to allow nothing which the most strict morality could condemn. There, where it is the custom to dance at weddings, let them dance, but every amusement which might pass beyond the limits of allowable merry-making and of innocent joy must be scrupulously avoided. It is also quite essential that a great part of the night should not be foolishly passed in eating and drinking, and rushing wildly round and round. All innocent pleasure, they say. That is not true; and confessors can bear a sorrowful testimony to the reverse.

Neither are the wedding feasts, which are, as a rule, interminable and most extravagant, marked by a perfect innocence. It is not allowable at these more than at any other to eat and drink *ad libitum*. Gluttony is always reprehensible, and drunkenness is always ignominious. It is those who have eaten too much and have drunk too freely who fall into the excesses which are so common at these marriage festivals; unseemly jests, offensive songs, and senseless laughter, all as contrary to modesty as to good taste. It is in the spirit of religion, in the quiet consciousness of the presence of God, and in pure and innocent joy, that Christians should pass their marriage day.

AFTER MARRIAGE.

AFTER the roses, thorns; and on the rose-trees, how few the roses, and how many the thorns; in this sense all marriages are, like rose-trees, more or less garnished with thorns. What are these thorns? What are the duties which fall so heavily upon married people?

(1) Their common life and common cares. All husbands have their faults, all wives have theirs. During the first few months everything is perfection. "My husband is so kind and considerate!" "My wife is an angel of goodness!" . . . But in time the perfection of the husband evaporates, and only the husband "full of faults" remains; the "angel" loses one by one the gilded plumes of her wings, until the disappointed husband is finally brought face to face with a woman, far from perfect, a woman exactly similar to other women! What can he do then? Confronted by this hard reality, must he grow angry, irritable, and despondent? No, indeed; he must simply bear it. Understand this clearly: he must. It is a duty, a conjugal duty; one of the first requirements in the yoke of marriage.

"But my husband makes himself perfectly hateful; he is unreasonable, obstinate, and always ready for some dispute!" Bear with him patiently; you are his wife, and in spite of all his faults he is your husband. Bear with him, and, still more, obey him in all that wounds neither honor nor conscience. The wife, indeed, owes her husband not help and sympathy alone, but deference, submission, honor, and obedience. . . . "But my wife is the most trying of women; my patience is all gone; she is ill-tempered, jealous, absurd!" Bear with her. At the moment of your marriage you entered into a religious engagement before God, and before her, to bear with her whatever she might be. Live with her then as happily as possible, show her all the affection, all the kind consideration which she has a right to expect from you. It is by gentleness and not by violence that you may even yet derive much happiness from your marriage. "A drop of honey," says St. Francis of Sales, "attracts more flies than a cask of vinegar."

The every-day duties of life are not so simple as some appear to think. People need no small amount of virtue to enable them to adapt themselves willingly to each other in the thousand little details of ordinary existence. It is, as a rule, more difficult for two persons

to live together than for one to live alone; yet it is what all men and women must do when they enter upon married life.

(2) Conjugal fidelity. The husband or wife who should violate their oaths of fidelity would, by so doing, commit a horrible sin called adultery. This sin is so grievous that it is pursued even by the civil laws. It violates all the fundamental laws of family life, and introduces disorder and depravity there, where holy union, sworn fidelity, pure and unalterable love alone should reign. Further, let no one deceive themselves: conjugal chastity is a difficult duty. As regards morality, marriage is not a state exempt from danger; far from this, it is attended by serious peril, as people of experience know, and is, consequently, not only less perfect but less happy than the state of celibacy and Christian continency. This point was formally declared by the Council of Trent against Luther. In order to preserve intact their mutual fidelity, a husband and wife should keep as strict a watch over themselves as a young man and a young girl. The wife should avoid all coquetry, and should shrink from anything that could appear like an endeavor to attract the admiration or attention of men; the husband, on his side, should avoid every species of flirtation, and should renounce all those trifling immunities, at which the worldly only laugh, but which prove so often to be but the first steps in the execrable and shameless path of adultery; through which alone a husband and wife are allowed to separate forever. It need not be said that while either is living, the other, though lawfully separated, may form no other marriage bond. Chastity is only possible to the married, as to the unmarried, by the almighty power of religion, the practice of which is, here on earth, the source of every good.

(3). The care and education of children. The first end of marriage is, in the designs of God, the creation and generation of children. It is a great grace to give to God and to the Church children who are destined for paradise. Sterility has always been regarded as a misfortune; and therefore it is an unpardonable thing that husbands and wives should repine when God sends them many children, and those who basely recoil before the most sacred of burdens are unworthy of the honor which God deigns to bestow upon them, when He raises them to the almost divine rank of father and of mother. It is a truth, which has been universally accepted in all ages, that the blessing of God rest upon numerous families.

The principal duty of the father is to provide by his industry, his care, and his work, for the needs and the well-being of his wife and

children. After an undutiful son, there is nothing worse than a bad father.

The duties of the mother relate more directly to the management of the household, to the details of domestic cares, and to the greatest watchfulness in all that concerns her little children. It is she who should tend and nourish them, except when that is truly impossible; it is she, even more than the father, who should teach them, from their tenderest childhood, to clasp their little hands in prayer, to lisp the holy names of Jesus and of Mary, and to love their heavenly Father; she must spare no pains to bring up her children well, but must be ever ready to give them good advice, simple instructions, rewards, reproofs, and constant care by night and day. A bad mother would be an anomaly; happily there are very few.

The care of children, the third duty of marriage, continues throughout life, even when the children have grown up: the father and mother should always labor for their good and their salvation: the Christian family is nothing but a community for mutual help and love; a community in which all work for their common welfare here, and for eternal happiness hereafter. The sacrament of matrimony is the soul of every household; it is a fountain of life springing forth in the midst of every Christian home to fertilize, to vivify, and to cause it to bring forth abundant fruits of happiness and salvation. Jesus Christ, through the sacrament of matrimony, becomes the King of families, just as He is, through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the King of the Church.

❧THIRD PART❧

WHAT IT IS TO BE A CHRISTIAN.

Do my Christian readers clearly understand what it truly is to be a Christian?

It certainly is not, as some people with slightly confused ideas appear to imagine, merely to abstain from murdering or plundering your neighbor. To do this is just to escape being a villain, that is all.

To be a Christian is not merely to be a good father, a good husband, a good son, a good workman, an industrious and honorable man, a good comrade, etc.; that is only to be an honest man, and a Christian is something more than an honest man.

To be a Christian is not merely to respect religion, to consider it good and useful, to acknowledge that Christianity has inspired noble deeds; that is simply to judge fairly, and to possess the good sense of an intelligent man: in order to hold such opinions as these nothing is needed but to rise above vulgar prejudices, and to despise the pointless sneers of a shallow philosophy.

Lastly, to be a Christian is not merely to observe certain exterior practices, such as to hear Mass regularly, to abstain, or even to go to confession. These practices, although very excellent, are nevertheless only means by which to become and to remain a true Christian. Then what is the Christian life? and what is a true Christian?

A Christian is a baptized man, who believes with his whole heart all that is taught, in the name of Jesus Christ, by the Pope and the Bishops, who have been entrusted by the Saviour to spread the Christian religion throughout the world; a man, moreover, who observes, as far as human weakness will allow, all the commandments of God and the laws of the Church; and who earnestly strives to the best of his power to imitate Jesus Christ, his God, his Saviour, and his great example.

A Christian is a man who loves God before all things, who would choose to suffer anything rather than offend Him, who detests sin

in others, and still more in himself; he is a man who loves and practises the right, who battles constantly and perseveringly with all his evil passions, and who, in spite of the evil inclinations which will sometimes rage powerfully within him, is still pure and humble, patient and merciful, indulgent to the faults of others, patient and resigned in misfortune.

A Christian is a man who is constant in prayer, and who follows in the footsteps of his Lord and Master, and thus, ever looking to Jesus, learns from Him the daily lessons of virtue that he needs. He pardons his enemies, even as Jesus Christ pardoned His. Like Him he goes about doing good. He loves all men, but especially the poor, the forsaken, the insignificant. In prosperity his heart is ever detached from earth, and lifted up to that heavenly home where the only true good is to be found. In poverty and suffering he is calm and full of hope, remembering that to the sorrows of Calvary succeeds the joy of the resurrection, and that it is only through the cross that we can gain the crown.

A Christian, then, is a living copy of Jesus Christ; a man who loves what Jesus Christ loves, condemns what He condemns, and judges in all things as He judges; and in this man, His faithful servant, Jesus Christ Himself does, in a manner, still live and walk with men.

Such is the true Christian, such we all ought to be, such we should all become or remain!

There is no position in life in which it is impossible to be a Christian. In poverty or wealth, in health or sickness, in youth or age, it is all one; and we should each, without exception, be holy, and should model our lives by that perfect pattern which we have just sketched out. Are we true Christians? Do we possess that humility, that singleness of heart, that disinterestedness and that purity of life, which constitute the Christian character. Let the conscience of each one of us answer this question! Alas! mine does not respond to it very readily—and reader, what of yours?

Let us, then, take courage, and turn to the Lord our God. Pagans, perhaps, until now, let us make haste to become Christians! If our own weakness cause us to shrink from such great and serious duties, let us have recourse to that powerful aid which the mercy of God has placed in the bosom of the Church. Let us pray, let us frequent the sacraments, let us seek in the confession of our sins a remedy for the past, and in frequent communion strength for the future. Let us make a vigorous effort, nor shrink from any trouble

that is required of us by God; does He not deserve it from us? Life passes quickly! Let us work while it is day: blessed is that servant whom He shall find watching; a few hours of weariness, a few hours of brave and patient fighting, and then, to the passing trials of this earthly probation succeeds the eternal rest, the unutterable gladness promised by the Saviour.

WHY SO MANY UPRIGHT PEOPLE FAIL TO FULFIL THEIR RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

It is a fact, and one which is much to be regretted, that there are a great number of men and women of unblemished character, of great goodness of heart, and who are leading correct and peaceful lives, yet who do not fulfil their religious duties. They pray, in some cases at all events, with a certain amount of regularity; they do not ridicule religion; they even defend it when there is need; from time to time they hear Mass on Sunday; they abstain on Good Friday, and sometimes on all Fridays; they regard as of the highest importance that religious care by which the education of their children is surrounded; their feelings are deeply touched at the time of the first communion of their son or daughter; they would not die without the sacraments for any earthly consideration; their life appears irreproachable. Only one thing is wanting: they neither go to confession nor to holy communion. Is this a great evil when all other duties are faithfully accomplished? Yes, a great evil. A vessel fastened to the shore by an iron chain becomes, if a single link of this chain chance to be broken, the mere sport of the waves, and loses its only protection. God is our Saviour amidst all the perils of human life and the storm of human passions; the chain which binds us to Him, and consequently saves us, is religion; and even as a chain is made up of a succession of links, so religion is made up of a succession of obligations which form one complete whole, and are closely attached one to another. To break one single link, to violate one single precept of religion, is to separate ourselves from God, to lose the life of the soul, and to jeopardize our eternal salvation. The obligation for every Christian to confess regularly, and to communicate at least once a year, is an absolute and rigorous law, the violation of which is a mortal sin. Therefore, however unbroken the rest of the chain, if this double link is wanting, all is broken between ourselves and God; whatever the blamelessness, integrity, and morality of our lives in every other respect, this twofold duty being

omitted, the soul is separated from Jesus Christ; and if it remain in this state, is lost for all eternity. Therefore, not to confess, and not to communicate, is a very great evil, a most disastrous fault, and an utter folly. Now what is the reason that the people of whom I speak do not go to confession? Are they wanting in faith? Not the least in the world. Is it human respect which holds them back? Perhaps a little, but that is not the true cause of which I desire to speak, although that may be also, alas! a very frequent one. Have they not sufficient courage to acknowledge their faults? If not, they should summon courage, whatever it may cost them. What is it, then, which keeps them thus so often far from God? Two mere trifles, which are, nevertheless, sufficiently powerful to compass the sins of innumerable souls: Habit, and a certain embarrassment as to the manner in which they are to break through that routine into which they have allowed themselves to fall. How many men, returning to their duties after ten, twenty, and thirty years of neglect, would have fulfilled them long ago, if they had only known what to do in order to go to confession and to communion. They have been in the habit of meeting priests, but they have not known them intimately enough to open their hearts to them; and then they have been held back by a feeling of false shame in acknowledging that they have not confessed for so many years. Occasions have not presented themselves, or have passed unheeded, and with them passed the months and years; and the gulf grew deeper and deeper still.

It is probable that these words will be read by more than one to whom they will apply. As a true friend I would entreat all such to summon courage, and to live no longer in this practical oblivion of God. Your path is very clear and very simple; go to the first priest you can find; seek him either in his own house, or in the sacristy of his church; priests are well accustomed to such visits; tell him simply and frankly that you have neglected your religious duties, that you desire to make your confession, and that you will be glad if he will give you his help. I promise you a kind reception; you will soon know by sweet experience how happy a thing it is to be at peace with God.

THE RELIGION OF THE HONEST MAN.

THERE are a number of people who believe in the religion of honesty. It may not then be unnecessary to endeavor to point out

to them the true nature of this religion. But, my honest friend, what is your religion? In what does it consist? What does it command? What does it forbid?

And this brings us to the first embarrassment of those whose religion is in honesty. For if they reply that it consists in fulfilling all duties well, in doing good, and avoiding evil, we can convict them of weakness on all points.

Let us turn first to a young man of unworthy morals and dissolute life, who saddens his mother's heart and dishonors his father's name. He will still assert that he is honest; making light of what he terms the "follies of youth," and excusing himself by the vain plea that he is no worse than other men have been whose honesty is now unquestioned.

Let us next consider the workman with his strong and muscular frame, who, although he may be honest, yet works only half as hard when he is paid by the day as when he is paid by the piece; our next character is one who, alas, goes reeling from the public house each Saturday night, taking but half of his honest earnings to his miserable wife and his frightened half-starved children: or a third, returning home with lowering brows, and ready oaths, and angry tones. And all these will indignantly claim to be considered honest men!

And again, another character; a man tyrannical over those whom he employs, a hard master, and a stern employer, harsh and exacting, yet who lays claim to a fair name among men, and whose boast is in his honesty.

What can you say of all these? If you admit them among the faithful of your religion of honesty, you must acknowledge that they fall far below that standard of right which we first considered.

I admit that it is a great thing to be an honest man; it is a great thing to be a good citizen, ever ready to maintain social order and public tranquillity; a good father, a good husband, a good son, a good neighbor, and a good friend. All this is very necessary, and those who fail in such duties fall far short of what is absolutely required of them. But I can assure you that all this is not sufficient, that these duties are not religion, although they are commanded by religion. Something more is required of a man, and that something is Christianity.

And why? Because there is a living God, who is your Creator and your Father. Because this Almighty God has created you to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him, and thus to merit an eternal

union with Himself, an eternal happiness in the life that is to come. Because, when this world shall have passed away, there shall be another which shall never pass away; a world in which God will bestow an everlasting reward upon those who have been faithful, and will visit with everlasting punishment those who have neglected to love Him and to serve Him. Because Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, came into our midst to teach us how to live in order to attain this glorious eternity; because He pointed out to us clearly and unmistakably the path of right, the path to heaven, and declared that whosoever would not hear His words should be rejected by His Father in heaven.

And lastly, because this divine Master has sent to men the pastors of His Church, and declared to us, when sending them to be the pastors of His people, that He would continually assist them with His Holy Spirit in the teaching and administration of the one true religion, that to hear them was to hear Himself, that to disobey them was to disobey Himself, even Jesus the Son of God!

And, therefore, in order to be true children of God, to accomplish our destiny in this world, and to live in peace and truth and holiness, it is absolutely necessary to believe and to practise the Christian religion just as it is taught to the world by the Pope and the Bishops of the Catholic Church. And this is why morality, although most necessary, is very far from being all-sufficient.

FEAR OF HUMAN OPINION.

"I WOULD willingly fulfil my religious duties, but I am afraid of ridicule."—Then you are afraid to go to heaven, and not afraid to go to hell? you must have a very singular courage and a remarkable determination! O man, feeble and faithless! you are indeed faint-hearted, and should blush for your own weakness and dishonor; for what, I ask, is a greater dishonor than cowardice?

Respect for human opinion in matters of religion is the greatest cowardice of all. It is a voluntary renunciation of that which is holiest and most sacred in man—his conscience. It is a weak abandonment of our most essential rights and of our most important duties! that of leading holy Christian lives, of accomplishing our destiny here, and of saving our soul hereafter! Such cowardice is something worse than weakness, it is a folly and a sin.

You are afraid to say your prayers, to avoid evil company and places of temptation, to go to church, to seek the friendship of the

priests, and to serve God. And what could be more deserving of honor than a conscientious fulfilment of such duties as these? Prayer, the service of God, and obedience to His law are the marks which most perfectly distinguish us from creatures without reason. For the animal destitute of reason has no eternal destiny, and fulfils all the laws of its being when conscious only of the passing moments of its limited existence. But you yourself are here on earth only that you may hereafter go to heaven; and time for you is nothing but a prelude to eternity. Heaven and eternity! Behold the end and aim of life, the end which should reign supreme above all others, and without which everything is lost. Therefore by not daring to serve God during your life, you wilfully renounce both heaven and eternity; you sacrifice God, your own salvation, your own soul, and your own happiness, even as you sacrifice your duty and your conscience to a miserable fear of man, which is a thousand times unworthy of a Christian, and is despicable in a man.

"I should be ridiculed," you say! What a grievous affliction! What effect would it have upon you? You can surely afford to despise what is so utterly beneath your notice. Supposing men laughed at you because you ate when you were hungry, and drank when you were thirsty, and warmed yourself when you were cold, because you loved your mother, because you were not a scoundrel. I am speaking seriously—would you change, do you think, and try to act in some manner which would give greater satisfaction to those who thus criticised you? You will not trouble yourself to answer such a question? There is that which is more reasonable, more natural, more lawful, and more necessary still; obedience to God your Creator, the practice of religion, and the keeping of His commandments. To fear to be a Christian, is to fear to be a reasonable being, it is to fear to be a good, conscientious, and honorable man.

Go, therefore, to confession, go to the holy altar, coward that you are! and fear God rather than man!

NEGLIGENCE.

FOR many years the world has been devastated by a fatal and terrible sickness, which has made dreadful ravages, in all places at one and the same time: in France, England, Italy, Europe, whether the air be bad or good, the people civilized or barbarous, the whole world suffers from its fatal and deathly influence; and for centuries victims have succumbed to it. You doubtless imagine that I am

referring to some one of those scourges which we call pestilence, cholera, typhus fever, etc.: but no; the evil that I would point out to you is still more terrible, and causes the death of a still greater number of men; it not only affects the body, but it also poisons the soul, and its fatal effects endure beyond the portals of the grave.

This deplorable evil is negligence. This it is which causes the ruin of whole families and plunges them into the frightful miseries to which they sooner or later succumb. This epidemic is so much the more to be dreaded because there are no signs which give warning of its terrible approach, and it seizes a man before he suspects it is near; it draws him little by little from his duties to God, and soon after from his duties to his family and toward his fellow-men. This scourge is one of the fatal fruits of original sin.

The first symptoms show themselves, when, on being confronted by some difficulty, you stop, hesitate, and address such words to yourself as these: I cannot! It is too difficult! I have no time! I will do it on some other occasion, but not now! It is not worth the trouble of beginning, because I shall never be able to go on! It is beyond my capabilities! Oh! then, while there is yet time, ask yourself quickly these two questions, and answer them by the light of your own conscience.

1st, What should I do if I were quite assured that directly I had accomplished that which now appears to be impossible, I should receive five pounds as the price of my efforts? 2d, What should I also do if I were equally certain that I should receive a hundred stripes directly I had yielded to those insidious suggestions of negligence, which I believe at this moment that I cannot resist?

These two questions, with the answer which your conscience cannot fail to give, will prove a sure and simple remedy against the evil I have pointed out to you.

I HAVE NO TIME.

OUT of ten persons who do not fulfil their religious duties, there are at least six or seven who will say to you when you speak to them about it, "I should be glad enough to do so, but I have no time; every one must gain their living. Religion is good for people with nothing else to do, who can live without working."

Nothing is more false than such reasoning as this, nothing could be more opposed to the spirit of Christianity; religion is made for all, even as God is the Father of all; and if there were any distino

tion to be made among men, it would, unquestionably, be the poor and the insignificant who would take precedence in the sight of God.

This is a very common error among the working classes, especially in large towns; and we must say that it entirely results from ignorance. They have an absurd idea of religion—they believe that it solely consists of a very great number of outward observances; and the daily work which is absolutely necessary to workmen in order to gain a living, being evidently incompatible with such practices, they solve the difficulty by the habitual words, which they lay down as an axiom, but which are in truth an unconscious blasphemy: "I have no time." But tell me, my friend, how much time you need to love God? How much time do you need to think of Him sometimes during the course of the day; to ask Him to bless you, to crown your efforts with success, and to give you the rest of heaven after your sorrows and weariness of earth? How much time does it take to keep from swearing,—to honor your father and mother and lawful superiors,—to abstain from drinking,—to pardon your enemies,—not to return evil for evil,—to bear with the faults of others? How much time does it take to be chaste and pure, to turn from evil thoughts, to avoid sinful conversation, to shun such and such a bad companion who would be sure to lead you into wrong? Does it take much time to repent when we have done some wicked foolish thing? Still more, does it take much time to pray morning and evening? In five minutes, in ten minutes at the most, this great duty can be perfectly fulfilled; and where is the man who cannot, if he so will, spare some few minutes, at the beginning and at the end of the day?

But then, you will say, religion commands so many other things. You must hear mass on Sundays and holidays. You must go to confession, and go to communion, and does not all that take time? That is what I mean when I say I have no time. And what do those who are quite as busy as you are, and often much more busy and still more in need of gaining a salary, and who yet do all that, and more than that? I know some who never pass one week without receiving the sacraments. How do they find time to fulfil their duties? What they do, you can do. It is the will that is wanting, and not the time. The reason that you do not find time, just as they find time, is because you have not the deep conviction that they have of the vital necessity of religion. You consider the body before the soul, they consider the soul before the body. Not that they neglect their families and their own bodily requirements.

no; only they know the value and the difference of things, and rule their lives according to the truth.

What would you say if your employer attempted to deprive you of the time to eat? You would leave him, and you would say: First of all, we must live! I say to you still more emphatically: first of all, even before the life of your body, take thought for your soul, which is the noblest part of your self; your soul, which makes of you a man, since through the body we are only animals; it is the soul which makes the man, and distinguishes him from the beast.

Religion gives life to your soul by uniting it to God, and yet you tell me, I have no time to practise religion! Then, make time, this necessary time; make time, whatever it may cost you to do it, no matter where, no matter at whose expense. No one in the world has a right to deprive you of it; neither your employer, nor your masters, nor your father, nor your mother, nor yourself; no one, without any exception!

The eternal salvation of your soul may not be taken away from you by any living creature, and if any one should attempt to rob you of the most sacred of your rights, then is the time to practise the great Christian rule: To lose everything rather than to lose God.

But it is my calling, you add, which prevents me from attending to my salvation. Is that true? Answer me carefully; for if, after having well reflected, you still answered "yes," I would say to you: then you must give it up, and find some other. What will it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

But is it really true that your calling actually prevents you from living a Christian life? Does your calling prevent you from thinking of God sometimes, from praying to Him morning and evening, from offering Him your troubles, your work, your privations? It is not your calling which forces you to take the holy name of God in vain, which drives you to public houses, and music halls, and all manner of evil resorts. The time that you spend thus would be far more than sufficient to make you a good Christian, if you would only employ it as a Christian should. For my own part, I know of no calling which need prevent the workman after his day's work is done from going to his confessor in the evening before all great festivals, and receiving the pardon of his sins, and advice and encouragement to lead a better life in the future. I know of no calling which need prevent him from going occasionally in the early morning to church, to hear low mass, and to receive communion. As a point of conscience, you must clearly see that all

have time to do what they will to do. But the will is an absolute necessity.

Therefore, say no longer, I have no time to be a Christian, for you only deceive yourself. Say, if you wish, I have not as much time, or as many opportunities, as I should wish. That may be so, but, after all, it is but the heart and the will to serve Him that God requires, and for this there is no question of time. To him who will not give to God his time, God will refuse His eternity.

BUSINESS BEFORE ALL THINGS.

AN old woman, a seller of marine stores, lived in a little village on the outskirts of Paris; she was held in no small repute among her neighbors owing to her proverbial merriment, her facetious remarks, and her candor upon all subjects. Now this good woman possessed some very striking qualities: to begin with, she had never killed any one, she had never helped herself to money out of her neighbor's pockets, she loved a joke, and was, besides, particularly successful in her own little business. It is true that she never stepped foot in a church, but she made a little bow to "*Monsieur le Curé*," every time that he passed her shop; she respected religion so much that once even, in an excess of zeal, she had formally bestowed a vigorous box on the ear upon a mason who had been disputing with a certain wine-seller on the subject of theology, and who had gone so far as to proclaim that there was no God.

She was, therefore, an incomparable old woman; she believed herself to be a most spotless character, and had, she said, nothing to reproach herself for—absolutely nothing—during the whole sixty-four years of her life.

Her favorite motto was, "Business before all things!" This was a plea she invariably used if any one attempted to reason with her, and to point out that at her age it would be surely more prudent to think of eternity. "Ah, that is all very fine," she would say in a tone of hopeless obstinacy, "I am not rich enough to do nothing, and go to church. I must gain my living; and then, business before all things! That is all I know." "Business is all very well," she was answered one day by a respectable woman who had come to see her, and who was very much liked in the village because of her many good qualities. "When people are as poor as we are, they must work and gain a living. But while they are gaining a living, they must take care they do not lose heaven; that has to be gained

also, and it cannot be won just by being a worthy, honest woman; you have to be a good Christian, and fulfil your religious duties. Mark my words: your duties." "Oh, I understand what you are saying; but to fulfil religious duties one must have time, and that is just what I have not. I've no time to spare—business before all things." "Ah, but you could find time if you wished; it takes little time and no trouble to say a prayer or two morning and evening." "Oh, as to that, I'm not so bad as you make out. I never forget to make the sign of the cross when I'm going to bed. My good man used to say to me that that was all nonsense, poor dear old man, God rest his soul! But no, I have always held firm, I have always served the good God." "But that is not enough, you cannot serve God just by making the sign of the cross when you go to bed; it is not even enough to say your prayers; you must, besides, go to hear Mass every Sunday."

"But I tell you I've no time! business——" "Nonsense! you're not going to make me believe that you can't do what I can do, who keeps a shop as well as you, and can only just make two ends meet. When we try to do anything for God, He is always ready to help the poor. I never sell on Sundays when I am not obliged, and then it isn't a sin. But generally my shop is closed; I go to Mass, like all good Catholics, and I take a little turn after church; I rest from my six days' work, and you see I'm none the worse for it. We have always been good friends and neighbors, and I wish I could get you to follow my example." "But my business——" "Why, your business would get on just the same, and even supposing you did make sixpence or a shilling a week less, what would that matter, compared to the service of God? Don't you see that we are not on earth to live just like dogs? Dogs don't go to Mass, not they; they can't confess, or think of God, or heaven, or hell. Now, come, listen to me, neighbor; next Sunday we will shut up shop, and go to Mass together. Will we not?"

I cannot inform you whether the good woman was finally successful concerning her old friend, or whether by the following Sunday she had returned to her ancient refrain: Business before all things. We believe, however, that the kind neighbor gained the day. She is dead now, and the poor old woman also; if the latter could return to earth, she would say no longer, "Business before all things," but rather, "Before all, salvation."

ON THE FOLLY OF DELAY.

THE past belongs to us no more; the future does not belong to us yet, and perhaps never will, the present only is ours. Therefore, whenever we have anything of consequence to do, let us, if possible, do it at once, and never put it off until that to-morrow which perhaps may not arrive; above all should we fear to defer it until some distant future.

An incident which happened recently in a prison at Paris will help to show how wise and necessary this rule of conduct is. The prison consists of two divisions; in one part the ordinary criminals are confined, while the other is entirely allotted to more youthful offenders, who, owing to their precocity in vice, have been condemned to a certain length of imprisonment. Easter-time was drawing near. The good chaplain of this prison, therefore, assembled all these young men, and after speaking to them on the serious obligation of fulfilling their Easter duties, he requested those who desired to prepare themselves to give him their names that he might write them down. All presented themselves, with only one exception. This was a young man of seventeen.

The chaplain, troubled at his silence, which contrasted so forcibly with the willing assent of the others, went the following day to see him in his cell. "Well, my friend," he said to him kindly, "you forgot, did you not, to have your name entered for the Easter duties?" "No, sir," answered the young prisoner calmly; "I did not forget, . . . but I have not decided; I am not prepared." . . . "Oh, my child, that is nothing! I will help you to prepare yourself. It is the simplest thing in the world. Let me enter your name with the others in my list. I will make it my care to see that you perfectly fulfil your duty." "No, sir, no; not now; another time perhaps. Not this year; next year." . . . "What, next year? But, my poor young friend, next year you will have just the same difficulties. Why should you delay? You are not sure." . . . "Yes, yes; I will do my Easter duties next year; this year I cannot." The chaplain saw it would be useless to say anything more, and left him, much distressed by such unhappy stubbornness. "Poor young fellow," he said to himself, "he refuses the only comfort that is left to him in his captivity. If he only knew what he rejects!"

The next morning he went down, according to his usual custom, to the cells in the infirmary to see another young prisoner, who was

also seventeen years of age, and who had received the last sacrament five or six days before. Passing down the corridor, he noticed on the door next to the one to which he was going the number of the prisoner who had shown such unhappy dispositions only the day before. Much astonished, he opened the door, and there, in fact, he saw the young man, lying down and looking very pale. "What is the matter?" he asked; "yesterday you appeared perfectly well, my child, and to-day I find you here in the infirmary?"

There was no answer. . . .

The chaplain drew near to him.

"Ah! my God!" he exclaimed, "he is very ill." And he went out immediately to call the doctor and the Sister of Charity. Both came in haste. "Look," said the priest, "this young man has fainted. What is the matter with him?" "It cannot be anything serious," answered the sister; "it is only an hour since he came down, merely complaining of a headache." The doctor went up to the bed, and, bending over the unfortunate young man, he felt his pulse and laid his hand on his heart. "He is dead, poor boy," he said in a tone of much feeling. But the priest stood, as though rooted to the spot, unable to utter a word, his eyes fixed with a look of unutterable sorrow upon the dead upturned face and the pale parted lips. . . . And it seemed to him as though he still heard the words: "Next year. . . no religious duties this year. . . . Another time—another year." . . . And Eternity had suddenly opened out before him,—an Eternity which could never bring to him "another year." . . . And this soul was already judged! The good priest turned from the lifeless body sick at heart.

In the next cell the other young prisoner was also stretched upon a bed of suffering. The sure signs of death were already written on his face. . . . "O Father," he said, in a faint, weak voice, when he saw the priest enter his cell, "O Father, I feel so happy! I am dying; I shall soon be with God! Since I received the sacraments, I have felt so happy, so peaceful!" And when the chaplain held out to him some hope of recovery—"Do not say so," he exclaimed; "do not tell me that I shall not die. I would much rather die now, you see, because I am so well prepared. . . . I feel that I love God now. . . . If I went out from here I should perhaps offend Him, and lose my own soul! Oh, no, it is far better for me to die now!" . . . And the same evening, this soul, so different from the other, appeared in its turn before Our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

The next day, the two coffins were placed side by side in the

chapel belonging to the prison, and were taken thence to the cemetery, where the same grave received them both. . . . When they shall both rise again at the last day, will their fate be the same? Alas! although the infinite mercy of God has unfathomable depths, of which we are utterly ignorant, have we not reason to fear that one of these two will be on the left of the Heavenly Judge, while the other will be placed on the right? And this only for having delayed until another time a duty which it would have been so simple to have accomplished at once!

Where is the man who can fail to profit by so terrible an example?

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

IN speaking of faith and of the Credo, we saw that the great reason for which we ought to believe all the truths of religion is that God Himself has revealed them by Jesus Christ His Son, who teaches them to us with infallible truth by the ministry of His Church.

The principle of morality is no less divine; and the reason for which we should faithfully observe the commandments of God, and of His Church, practise Christian virtues and live according to the rules of the Gospel, is that God Himself so wills, and that this supreme holy will is made known to us most clearly through Jesus Christ and His ministers.

The word morality means the moral law; in Latin, *morum lex*.

To be moral or righteous, is simply to live in accordance with that law which comes from God and which is the expression of His will; to be immoral or unrighteous, is to follow the natural inclinations in preference to the will of God, and to be ruled by the passions, and not by the divine law. Conscience is that inward light which reveals to us our duty, which reproaches us when we transgress, and applauds our obedience when we have the courage to listen to the voice of God, and to prove ourselves true Christians.

But just as there is in the world false money, which is easily mistaken for good unless it is closely examined, so is there a false morality, which is, alas! very prevalent, and which entirely results from ignorance and unbelief; a morality which does in no way suffice for the accomplishing of the will of God, and yet which many people content themselves with practising. It has been called ironically the morality of the reasonable man, but it is a very different thing from true Christian morality. Those who possess no other, falsely imagine that they have all that is needful; and this deceiving

tranquillity is often the greatest obstacle to their return to the true service of God. There is nothing more convenient nor more elastic than is this false morality. We might even add that there is nothing more immoral, or, at least, that there is nothing more powerless to render a man truly virtuous. It might be summed up in two negative commands: Thou shalt not kill.—Thou shalt not steal. Two very desirable and praiseworthy requirements unquestionably, but such as do not go a great way, seeing that, beyond the precincts of a prison, nearly all mankind, both bad and good, could quite conscientiously claim this remarkable title to the esteem of their fellow-men. This mysterious moral law goes no farther, but leaves everything else wrapped in a vague uncertainty, which must be peculiarly soothing to those who are drawn by inclinations toward some action of doubtful morality. It is true that it grandiloquently commands its votaries to be good fathers, good sons, good husbands, and good citizens; but if we enter upon the question of the daily duties of life, and rules of conduct, morals, and temper, or methods of subduing vice, evil habits, selfish instincts, it has not a word to say; it forbids nothing and tolerates everything. Having this law for his only rule of life, a man might be a gambler, a drunkard, and a profligate; he might be passionate, quarrelsome, and selfish, a spendthrift, or a miser, at will; he might be utterly destitute of love of any one except himself, and devoured by idleness, pride, or sensuality.

Who does not see the hollowness of such a morality, and how impossible it is to find in such indeterminate maxims the necessary power to subdue the rebellion of the passions? It is, in fact, nothing but a deception, which enables men to do evil without burdening their consciences too heavily. Unfortunately for them, God is more exacting, and who can say that He is wrong?

That pure Christian morality, which He Himself has given us, is the law by which He will hereafter judge us; and it is no more within our power to modify it than it is in our power to change the course of the stars, or to alter the laws of nature. Very different from the morality of the rationalist is that Christian morality resting entirely upon the religion of which it is the practice. Its foundation, to which it refers everything, is the love and service of Our Lord Jesus Christ; the Gospel, with its divine maxims, is its code, and it teaches us first the necessity of penance, of self-renunciation, of brotherly love, of humility and gentleness, of purity of heart, and chastity; of detachment from the world, of obedience to God and to His Church; in one word, the practice of the Christian life and

Christian virtues. It must be acknowledged that there is some difference between this rule of conduct, and the unmeaning maxims of the good father, the good son, the good husband, and the good citizen. The most such maxims as these are capable of, as was wittily said by St. Francis of Sales, is to save us from being needy, and to gain us the esteem of those who neither look below the surface nor scrutinize too closely.

As it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of our souls that we obey the law of God and live in accordance with His will, it is most important, it is even necessary, to have a clear knowledge of Christian morality in order to be able to practise it. Let us, therefore, study it together in all its principal teachings.

CONCERNING CONSCIENCE.

CONSCIENCE is that inner voice which rules our conduct, and passes judgment upon our actions, teaching us whether they are good or evil, justifiable or clearly forbidden. The voice of conscience sounds approvingly when we do right, and visits us with sharp remorse when we do wrong. This voice, this judge, is God Himself; it is the living Truth; it is Jesus Christ dwelling within us. We can by no possibility drive this divine voice out from the sanctuary of our hearts. We may close our ears that we may not hear when we are bent on resisting it and the desire to do evil, but we can never silence the voice of God, which thus becomes, even in this world, our judgment and our condemnation. If, on the contrary, we are obedient to its teaching, if our lives are ruled by this hidden law, then shall the soul enjoy on earth a foretaste of the joys of Heaven, and shall see in God only a Saviour, a Father, and a Friend, who communicates to it, even in this world, that peace and happiness which it is destined to possess, in perfect plenitude, hereafter.

Conscience is an unerring tribunal, and we must either be guided by its judgments or fall into sin. But it often happens that human weakness and the wiles of the devil prevent us from clearly discerning the voice of conscience. We are, then, in the same embarrassment as the servant who hears but indistinctly the orders of his master, or, rather, under the same delusion as a man partially deaf who believes that he hears something different from what has been really said. How should one act who finds himself in this false position?

In the first place, and this is a general rule, it is never allowable

to go against the conscience—that is to say, no one may ever perform an action which they believe to be guilty, or abstain from an action which they believe to be commanded. Therefore the one thing needful is to cultivate a clear, true, loyal, and upright conscience, and to do this, it is generally sufficient to seek the truth earnestly, and to resist all deceptions.

If, nevertheless, in spite of good intentions we cannot succeed in forming a conscientious judgment, we must seek and follow with simplicity the advice of some enlightened person, of a good priest, if that be possible, and be guided by his decision. There is no rule of conduct more practical than this, for many good people, whose conscience is tender and scrupulous, will often feel embarrassed and doubtful as to how they ought to act. If, by any misfortune, we have neither time nor means of seeking advice, let us form as conscientious a decision as we can, and strive earnestly to do that which we think to be right, in all cases when we cannot feel certain. When involved in absolute doubt, let us ever choose the safest side, and follow it to an extreme rather than risk the chance of offending God.

We do not hesitate to say that a clear conscience is the true secret of happiness. Happiness is deeply rooted in the heart of man: it is not shut up within the purse, nor is it to be attained by means of bodily indulgence. Those who enjoy an inward peace, who love God, and seek to please and serve Him, may be happy even in sickness and suffering, and amidst all the privations of poverty. Death itself wears a different aspect, and every day good Christians prove, by their calmness, their serenity, and their happiness at that supreme moment, the truth of what we have just said.

“This is a happy day for me,” said a poor soldier, condemned to death, to the priest who was assisting him and leading him to the place of execution, “a very happy day, father! I shall soon be with God, I am going home. My heart is so full of gladness, it seems as if I must be going to some joyful festival. I have sinned very heavily, but I hope that God will show me much mercy.” This poor condemned soldier had fully made his peace with God during the two months which passed between the sentence and its execution. Moved to the deepest repentance, he had approached the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist every week, and his conscience, transfigured by religion, was now in the enjoyment of a perfect peace, and a marvellous calm.

Do not wait until the last moment to purify your conscience. If

it reproach you with some serious fault, do not harden your heart and deceive your own self; but rather repent of the evil of which it accuses you, and at once, like the prodigal son, arise, and return unto your Father. Summon all your courage; do not wait until it is too late. Go and make a good and sincere confession of your sins to some good priest; from him you will obtain mercy, encouragement, and consolation, and he will restore to you the inestimable treasure of a quiet conscience, by pardoning your sins in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE GRACE OF GOD.

WE must not think that we only need a clear knowledge of our duty, and shall then necessarily accomplish it. To think that would be to lose sight of human weakness, and the strife of human passions. We need strength to do the right, and to obey God; and so much the more strength, since, by reason of original sin, tumult and disorder lay waste the heart of man, which ever inclines to evil rather than to good.

This necessary strength to live as a good Christian, to avoid sin, and to practise Christian virtues, is given to us by God through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and it is this strength which we call grace. Without it, we could neither do right nor avoid wrong, but with its help we are capable of doing all things and suffering all things in order to accomplish the will of God. Grace is to the soul what light is to the eyes; without the light we cannot see, but with the light we are enabled to perceive even dim and distant objects.

Grace is the internal and spiritual union of the soul with Our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the indwelling of Jesus Christ in the soul, and the indwelling of the soul in Him. From the inmost recesses of our soul, as from the inmost recesses of His temple and His sanctuary, the Son of God gives to us the continual assistance of His Holy Spirit to enable us to repulse the attacks of the devil, our enemy and His, and to help us to observe all the commandments of God. He never abandons us to our own weakness; He never refuses us His grace; and when we sin, we alone are guilty of turning wilfully and deliberately away from God.

This union of the soul with Jesus Christ constitutes the true life of the soul. The life of the body springs from its union with the soul; and the life of the soul springs from its union with Jesus Christ, its Saviour and its God. And this life of the soul need never end, since,

in heaven, we are destined to enjoy an eternal union with God, if we will but make the noblest use of our free-will while here on earth, and constantly endeavor to preserve the grace of God. And next, let us ask, in what manner is this grace bestowed upon us? and how is the mystical union of the soul with Jesus Christ accomplished? By prayer, and the holy sacraments.

We may compare the grace that is given us by God to the pure waters of a fountain, which flow for our benefit, through many different outlets. One of these channels, less important perhaps than the rest, but always open, would fitly represent prayer, to which we may have recourse under all circumstances; seven other jets of water, far more powerful, but less frequently resorted to, would well represent the seven sacraments.

Let us, then, constantly thirst for this divine water of grace, and thus, like true children of God, drink of the waters which Jesus will give, and which spring up into life everlasting.

THE BEST STATE.

WHICH is the best of all states? Out of a hundred or a thousand, which is the best of all! Certainly it is not mine; the work is too hard, and the profits too small. It must be that of a man with an income of his own, and nothing to do from morning till night but amuse himself. To weary himself, you might add, from the mere fact of having so little to do. No, that is not the best state certainly. It is not the rank of a king or an emperor; sovereigns are overwhelmed with hard and wearisome duties; it was a king who said sadly to one of his ministers when he was complaining of the intolerable burden of his responsibilities, "I am far more to be pitied than yourself, my friend; we are both of us condemned to hard labor; but yours is only for a time, while mine is labor for life." To govern men is decidedly no easy task, and the best state of life is not the office of a king. Perhaps you will tell me it is the condition of a poor man? No, not that: I will solve the enigma. The best state is the state of grace. The state of grace! and what is that? There is no patent for any such profession? No, but this is something far better; the patent for all other callings is granted by the government, the patent of the state of grace is given by God, by the King of heaven and earth! He gives it gratuitously to all who desire it, and He never withdraws it until it is wished for no more. With this patent, and in this admirable condition, men make a rapid

fortune; they accumulate treasures which far surpass in value all the treasures of bankers, and millionaires, and the princes of this world; treasures which no one can take from us, and which are safely laid up where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. If that is the case, you say, I will certainly renounce my present calling, which is wearisome and far from lucrative, and make choice of this excellent state which appears so wonderfully desirable. That is well, nothing could be simpler; you need not even give up your present calling in order to serve a new apprenticeship. The state of grace which is given by God to those who love Him is compatible with all others, with one single exception: the state of sin. And now you already understand to what I desired to lead you, and what the state of grace really is. It is, in truth, the best of all states. It is that of a pure conscience, at peace with God and itself; the happy state of a soul which is not stained by any mortal sin, and is firmly purposed to remain a Christian soul, by the fulfilment of its duties to God and man. The priest brings and preserves to the world this precious gift of the state of grace. He bestows it for the first time in baptism, in which the child is cleansed from original sin, admitted among Christians, and made a child of God.

And, again, whenever during the course of our lives, we are so unhappy as to fall from this holy state by reason of sin, the priest has the power to restore it to us by the pardon which he gives in the name of Jesus Christ, in the sacrament of penance.

Lastly, he presents to us, every day if we will, in the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, the mysterious food which gives to our weakness strength to resist temptation and to persevere in the state of grace. This is the state peculiar to all true Christians. A Christian without grace resembles a withered branch, which is no longer able to bear flowers or fruit. His works, however praiseworthy, are utterly useless as far as heaven is concerned; they are dead in the eyes of God, and consequently pass unrewarded.

Sin, which separates the soul from God, is the death of the soul; grace, which, on the contrary, unites it to God, is the life of the soul. A Christian who does not make it his chief care, before all other things, to be in a state of grace, both by avoiding sin, and by repenting with his whole heart if he has been so unhappy as to fall into it, is not worthy of the holy name he bears, and does not comprehend the first word of the religion of Jesus Christ.

Let us therefore question our own hearts, and search our own consciences. Are we in a state of grace? Since our last confession and our last communion, have we served God well? Have we prayed well? Have we kept the Sundays holy? Have we observed the commandments of God, and of His Church? Have we not fallen back weakly into certain serious sins, which we had promised ourselves for the future to avoid?

If you only perceive a little dust, only a little human weakness, on the white robe of your conscience, thank God with all your heart and renew your good resolutions to be ever pure and faithful. If, on the contrary, the holy robe of innocence is torn and defiled, like the prodigal son in the Gospel, call all your courage to your aid, rise, and, full of confidence and true repentance, return unto your father: go and confess your sins; go, and regain the white robe, the holy robe of Christians, and then, with the help of God, strive never again to abandon that best and noblest state of life—the state of grace.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

It is not enough to do the right, it is also necessary to do the right in the right way. In order to be a good Christian, to please God, and to go to heaven, an outward observance of the Ten Commandments of God, and the six commandments of the church, is far from sufficient; it is also necessary to observe them with certain interior dispositions which we call the Christian spirit, or Christian virtue. No one is a Christian except upon this condition. The outward observance of the commandments is like the body of the Christian life: the Christian spirit is the soul of this body. A body without a soul is only a corpse and not a man. What, then, is this Christian spirit without which no one can be truly a child of God? It consists of certain dispositions or qualities which are called Christian virtues, and the possession of which renders men more and more like to Jesus Christ. Among these virtues the principal and most necessary are:

Humility, which consists in acknowledging willingly and thankfully that, since all the good we have comes from God, we cannot glory in anything, but should remember constantly that, if others seem to see in us any good or noble qualities, it is to God alone that praise and honor are due. For this reason, a man who is truly humble never esteems himself above others, but ever distinguishes

between his own weakness and nothingness and the gifts that God has given him.

Humility is the rarest and most difficult, as well as the most fundamental of all Christian virtues. "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Meekness is that holy disposition which enables us to live, as in the sight of Our Lord, in perfect peace, and to be full of sweetness and forbearance both to others and to ourselves, avoiding all manner of anger or strife. Meekness is the balm of life. If humility is the perfection of love to God, meekness is the perfection of love to man.

Patience is that Christian virtue which enables us to bear without murmuring, and even with joy, in union with our crucified Saviour, all the sufferings, injuries, persecutions, and trials of this present life. It is by patience that we may become in all things conquerors over ourselves; it is by patience that we may merit a participation in that glory which God prepares for His children as their everlasting reward.

The virtue of poverty, or detachment from all earthly goods, is that rare and holy disposition by which the heart becomes impervious to the love of riches, and all perishable things, and is ever lifted from earth to heaven, where the only real and lasting good is to be found. This spirit is as necessary and as possible to the rich as to the poor. A Christian may possess the merit of poverty in the midst of riches, if his heart is not attached to them; while he may be utterly destitute of it in the midst of all the privations of real poverty, if he have an excessive desire for the riches and comforts which God Himself withholds.

Chastity, or purity, is that Christian virtue by which all the disordered desires of the flesh become subject to reason and to the will of God, and which thus preserves the whole man in a state of holy innocence, and enables the soul to give itself to the service of God. Chastity of heart is the essential principle of chastity of body; the one guard is within, the other without. It is the most delicate and the most fragile of all virtues. It is above nature, but not contrary to nature. It is to be observed in all states, although according to different degrees.

Obedience is that Christian virtue which subjects our will to the holy will of God, who is our only Lord and Master; and, for the sake of God, to the will of all our legitimate superiors, our ecclesiastical superiors, our civil superiors, and our domestic superiors. By obeying his superiors it is God Himself whom the Christian obeys,

since all true authority comes from God, who is alone the Lord of all things. It is the want of obedience which has produced all heresy and schism, and which has often given birth to revolutions.

All these virtues may be summed up in one alone, and that is Christian penance, viz., self-renunciation, constancy in mortifying and repressing without ceasing all the corrupt inclinations of nature, to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ our divine Model, and to live in accordance with the holy rules of the faith. If you do not do penance, said the Saviour, you shall all likewise perish. Lastly, the virtue which should crown, predominate, and give birth to all other Christian virtues is divine charity, or the love of God, and of Jesus Christ. To love Him, to serve Him from love, to suffer everything for His love, to love our brethren, our enemies, for love of Him: this is the perfection, this is the soul of the Christian's life. He is our God, and through Him alone can we reach heaven.

Blessed are they who seek to practise the virtues we have briefly pointed out. We will next consider the vices which have power to destroy these virtues. From life we will pass on to speak of death.

SIN AND VICES.

THE Christian life is the participation in the holiness of our Lord, our divine Head, and great Example; sin and vice are the participation in the rebellion of the devil, the enemy of God and men. Sin is not the same thing as vice. Sin is to vice what the fruit is to the tree; what the effect is to the cause. Sin is a transitory act, vice is an evil disposition, a permanent state of the heart. They have one thing in common, they are both opposed to the divine law. Sin must be either mortal or venial. Mortal sin is so decidedly guilty that it separates us from Jesus Christ, causes death to the soul, and draws down upon our heads the terrible judgments of God. Venial sin is a less grievous fault, of which the effect is to draw us away from God, without entirely separating us from His love. Mortal sin may be compared to death, and venial sin to sickness.

It is often difficult in practice, to be assured whether a sin is mortal or venial. For this reason both should be most carefully avoided. We may give, however, a few general rules by which a mortal sin may be distinguished:

1. By a will set to do evil.
2. By a sufficient knowledge of the evil that is committed.
3. By a matter of certain importance, nevertheless, as the will is

the principal agent in all questions of right and wrong, a grievous sin may unquestionably be committed by the will and the desire to commit it.

The vices which bring forth sin consist of certain evil dispositions, directly opposed to those Christian virtues of which we have been speaking. There are seven principal vices, which are, however, all of the same order or class.

Pride, the most fundamental of all vices, and the most at enmity with God, whose glory it does, in a manner, appropriate. Pride is that evil tendency to attribute to ourselves all the good that God has bestowed upon us, and to feel a certain amount of complacency in our own excellence, in our merits, in our good works, in our virtues; it leads us to desire and to seek the praise of men, and renders us vain, susceptible, arrogant, ambitious, and selfish. Pride is the special sin of Satan, and the most dangerous of all vices.

Covetousness is an overweening desire for worldly goods, and especially for money, which is the representative of earthly possessions. Just as the virtue of poverty may be practised in the midst of riches, so is it possible to be very avaricious even although penniless, since avarice springs from the heart and not the purse. Covetousness must not be confounded with economy; but people sometimes deceive themselves, and imagine they are economical, while they are in reality avaricious.

Lust, or impurity, is an inordinate love of carnal pleasures. This terrible vice, which brings with it both its shame and its punishment, is the most formidable enemy of society, and especially of youth.

Anger, which is the consequence of pride, is the vice which leads us to resent every species of contradiction, and which drives the peace of God from our souls.

Gluttony is the inordinate love of eating and drinking. The glutton does not eat to live, but lives to eat; he does not drink to allay his thirst, but drinks for the love of drinking. Drunkenness is the worst form of gluttony, and the most disastrous in its effects.

Envy is that utterly selfish and unchristian disposition which causes us to regard with regret the success and well-being of our neighbor. And lastly, sloth is that spiritual heaviness and torpor which renders us negligent and indolent in well-doing, which destroys in our hearts all fortitude and generosity, and causes us to turn with loathing from all laborious duties or wholesome self-exertion, whether in the service of God, or in the duties of our state of life.

These vices, which are also called the deadly sins, are the seven

great roads which lead infallibly to hell all who are mad enough to enter upon this downward journey. If we are already treading either of these paths, let us make haste to retrace our steps; this may be done by means of a contrary virtue. If we are proud, let us become humble; if we are passionate, let us become meek and patient; if we are covetous, let us become poor in spirit and detached from the things of earth; if our lives are sinful and defiled, let us become pure and holy; if we are gluttonous and intemperate, let us become abstemious and sober; if we are envious, let us become charitable; if we are slothful and indolent, let us take courage, break the bonds of evil habits, and strive manfully to do the right.

To know, to detest, and to avoid all that is evil, to know, to love, and to practise all that is good, such is the summary of Christian morality, for the perfect fulfilment of which, let us remember, we must be actuated by one only aim—the desire to please God, and to obey the most holy laws of our sovereign Lord and Master.

THE DECALOGUE.

HAVING now clearly defined the nature of Christian morality, we will go on to speak of that grand summary of the divine law which is called the Decalogue.

Decalogue means, in Greek, the ten words. It was God Himself who spoke these words to the human race, thus summing up the principal commandments which it is necessary to observe in order to attain eternal life. These commandments are commonly called the ten commandments of God. Known, from the commencement of the world, to the ancient patriarchs, they were solemnly promulgated on Mount Sinai, from the midst of thunder and lightning, and transmitted to Moses for the chosen people of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ sanctioned them anew, and raised them to perfection by affixing to them the divine precepts of the Gospel, and by embodying the whole in the two commands of love to God and love to men. The three first of these ten commandments relate immediately to our duties to God; the other seven more directly concern our duties toward our neighbor and ourselves; nevertheless, all equally relate to God, for whose love, and by whose command, we must obey them.

Love of our neighbor would not be, in fact, a religious sentiment, if it had no connection with God, in whom alone all religion concentrates.

By the first commandment of God we are bound to adore Him as

our sovereign Lord and Master, the principal and the end of all things, as our Creator, and as the Holy of holies; to believe in Him, and in all His words, because He is the sovereign truth; to hope in Him, because He is infinite goodness and infinite mercy; to love Him above all things, and to devote ourselves to His service, because He is the supreme good, perfection that knows no limit, and love that knows no end. We sin against this commandment by unbelief, by religious indifference, by the omission of prayer, and by negligence in the worship of God, by despair, and lastly by impiety.

The second commandment forbids us, not only to blaspheme the sacred and adorable name of God, but also to utter it without reverence, and in this command we must include the holy names of Jesus and of Mary.

By the third commandment we are bound to keep holy the seventh day of the week, called Sunday, and, for this purpose, to rest from material (or servile) work, and join with others in assisting together at the holy sacrifice of the Mass and to give ourselves up more especially to prayer and Christian works. The non-observance of these three commandments is one of the scourges which has been chiefly instrumental in drawing down upon our century the strokes of divine justice.

By the fourth commandment, the first of those which regulate our immediate duties to our neighbor and ourselves, we are bound to honor, love, and assist our father and mother, and to obey them, and all our lawful superiors, in everything that is not contrary to the law of God; to treat our equals and our inferiors with the same consideration that we ourselves desire, and to have respect to all men, remembering that they are, like ourselves, children of God and brethren of Jesus Christ.

The fifth commandment forbids homicide, hatred, slander and vengeance, duels and conflicts, and all that can injure our neighbor in his life, in his body, and in his reputation. Anger is principally condemned by these words of the Decalogue.

By the sixth commandment we are bound to be ever chaste and pure in the sight of God and men. Our body does not belong to us; it belongs to God, who alone created it. This commandment is broken by evil thoughts wilfully consented to, by reading pernicious books, by licentious conversation, and, generally speaking, by all that is hurtful to holy purity.

The seventh commandment defends against all unjust attacks the possessions of another. It condemns theft, and every injustice which

could in any way tend to deprive our neighbor of that which lawfully belongs to him.

The eighth commandment forbids all false testimony and lies. We owe the truth to our neighbor just as we owe it to ourselves. Lies that could injure our neighbors are the most serious of all. This sin is called calumny.

The ninth commandment forbids all sinful desires in everything that relates to purity; and in this prohibition it goes still further than the sixth.

Finally, the tenth and last commandment requires from us such a perfect respect for justice, that even a single unjust desire for the possessions of another should be banished from our heart.

Such are the ten great commandments which sum up the whole of morality, and of which the law of the Gospel is but the perfect development. "Keep the commandments, and you shall live," said our divine Master to us all. "*Hoc fac, et vives.*"

THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

IN a previous explanation of the Credo we defined the Church as the great society of Christians, governed and sanctified by Jesus Christ, its divine Pastor, and by the Pope and the Catholic Bishops, the visible representatives of this divine head. The commandments of the Church are those religious laws by which the Church is governed. The lawful pastors of the Church have alone the right to command us thus in the name of God, since they are the sole inheritors of the ministry of St. Peter and the Apostles, and of the promises of Jesus Christ.

The Pope and the Bishops are men, it is true, but they are men invested with the divine and priestly power of Jesus Christ, and therefore it is nothing but want of a right apprehension to say, as is sometimes said by those who consider themselves wonderfully advanced and enlightened: "I am quite willing to obey God, but certainly not men like myself."

We are all obliged, under pain of disobedience, which is more or less serious according to circumstances, to obey unquestioningly all the laws laid down for us by the Pope and the Bishops of our diocese. There are, however, six principal laws, which we are accustomed to regard more particularly as the commandments of the Church. These six regulate the sanctification of Sundays and holy days of obligation, public penance, and the frequentation of the

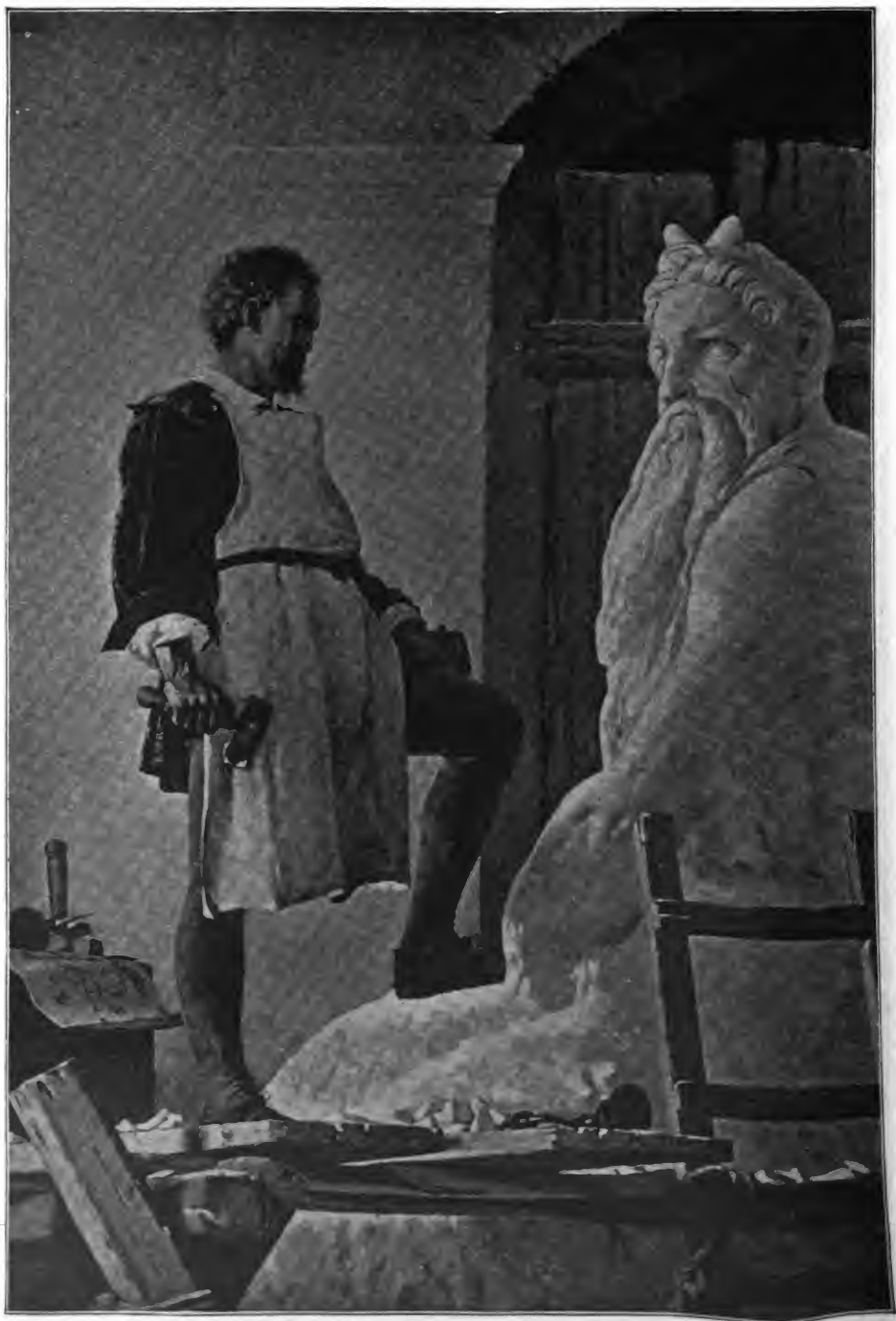
sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. The two first command all Christians, who are not positively prevented, to keep holy all Sundays and holy-days of obligation, viz., the Circumcision, the Immaculate Conception, the Ascension, the Assumption, All Saints, and Christmas Day. These feasts must be observed exactly like Sunday when they fall during the week. The principal obligation imposed upon the faithful for the sanctification of Sundays and festivals is to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

The commandment by which the Church regulates the public penance of Christians relates to the days of fasting and abstinence. The days of abstinence are all Fridays and the Sundays in Lent; the fasting days are the forty days of Lent; certain Vigils; the Ember days; and in England the Wednesdays and Fridays in Advent. To abstain is to go without meat. To fast is to eat but one full meal in the day. What is commonly called a collation is not intended as an additional repast, but only as a refectio to ward off sickness and prevent weakness. Those who are really incapable are dispensed from fasting, but to act with a safe conscience every one should first consult their confessor; all, after the age of reason, are obliged to abstain on Fridays, and, after the age of twenty-one, to fast and abstain throughout Lent, upon the Ember Days, and on certain Vigils, or days preceding festivals. As these regulations are, however, different in different countries, it is necessary to follow in everything the commands of the Bishops of the diocese, which are always announced by the parish priest.

The two commandments of the Church relative to the sacraments oblige the faithful, under pain of mortal sin and excommunication, to confess at least once a year, as soon as they shall have reached the age of reason, and when the priest shall find them capable of being instructed to communicate at Easter; it is this that is commonly spoken of as the Easter duties.

It is better, far better, to approach much more frequently to the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist; but it is not a universal obligation except at the festival of Easter. If from negligence, or from some less culpable motive, any one should have been unable to fulfil this duty at the time fixed by the Church, the omission must be atoned for as quickly as possible, even though it should be already the end of the year. It need not be said that a bad confession and a sacrilegious communion do not satisfy this law of the Church.

How entirely the whole aspect of the world would change, if all rendered a faithful and willing obedience to the holy laws of the



M. ANGELO AT WORK ON HIS MOSES.—A. TORRINI.—Michael Angelo, an artist of indomitable will and superhuman energy, the last and most famous of the great Florentine masters, after executing his vast and magnificent design for the decoration of the Sixtine chapel, produced in his *Moses* one of the greatest works of the sculptor's art.

Church! It is almost impossible to obey them without quickly becoming a true Christian.

MOSES AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

IN our childhood we all learned the wonderful history of Moses. This great servant of God was chosen to be the deliverer of the Hebrew race unjustly oppressed by the wicked in Egypt. Endowed with divine power from on high, he worked such terrible and startling miracles before the Pharaoh, or King of Egypt, that he obliged this cruel prince to allow the four hundred thousand children of Israel whom he held in bondage to return to their own country. These miracles are known by the name of the ten plagues of Egypt.

They were worked in the sight of all the people, during a succession of months, and are so certain, so authentic, the incredulous have never been able, in spite of many efforts, to explain them away in any reasonable or justifiable manner.

In their passage from Egypt to Judea, the Israelites, conducted by Moses, came to the borders of the Red Sea, and we all know how the leader of God's people, in the name of the Creator, commanded the waters of the Red Sea to divide in order to allow the innumerable flock, which God had intrusted to his guidance, to pass through upon dry land.

On the third day of the third month after their departure from Egypt, they reached the foot of a mountain become forever celebrated under the name of Mount Sinai. This was the place God had chosen in which to give to His people, and through His people to the whole world, that incomparable moral code which we call the Decalogue.

Moses, the friend of God, received the command to prepare all the people for this grand solemnity by a fast of three days. Barriers were placed at the foot of Mount Sinai, and the penalty of death was pronounced by the Lord Himself against him who should dare to pass this boundary without being called. At the commencement of the third day the holy mountain was suddenly enveloped in mysterious clouds, lightning surrounded it on all sides, and the whole people, in awe and trembling, heard the voice of the Lord their God calling unto Himself His servant Moses. In obedience to the divine voice, Moses passed the barrier, and ascended with humility and trust to the summit of Mount Sinai. There God deigned to speak to him as friend to friend. Moses passed forty days upon the mountain

neither eating nor drinking; having strengthened himself previously with that divine food by which the blessed Saints and Angels live eternally in heaven.

It was before this long communion with the Lord that there were given to the people of God those ten commandments, which comprehend the whole moral code of the ancient and also of the new alliance. God promulgated them Himself in the presence of all the people, who heard distinctly the voice of the Lord, the eternal Word, the divine Truth, who should one day become incarnate, and should thus dwell, one God among us, under the adorable name of Jesus.

I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.

2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

3. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

4. Honor thy father and thy mother.

5. Thou shalt not kill.

6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

7. Thou shalt not steal.

8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

Such is the divine text of the commandments of God. The first three, as we have before said, relate more particularly to our duties toward God, and the other seven more especially to our duties toward our neighbor.

We will next give a simple explanation of each of these great commandments; and, in the mean time, let us earnestly endeavor to put them into practice, since it is for this purpose that we are here on earth. One thing only is needful, and that is to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him; other duties may be good and desirable, but they can never be but of a secondary importance.

Who then is truly wise? and whose the life that most fully answers the great object of existence? The Christian; and the Christian's life: the life of the man who strives to accomplish the will of God, and to whom time is nothing worth, but as a means to gain eternity; while those who pass their days in pleasure and in all

manner of occupations, shutting God as it were, out of their lives, must surely be possessed by some species of madness since they are content to lavish all their powers and capabilities upon the merest trifles, and to neglect the one sole object of creation—the noble end and holy aim for which they were born into the world.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

ONE day a doctor of the Jewish law questioned Our Lord, asking Him which was the greatest of the commandments. Jesus answered him and said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy strength, and with all thy soul. This is the first and greatest commandment.

After an instant's reflection, this answer will appear very simple, and the ignorance or rather forgetfulness of this fundamental truth is a striking proof of the thoughtlessness of the age in which we live. Men think of everything before they think of God, they love everything before Him, or, rather, instead of loving Him. From this indifference, which, although it is less detestable than utter impiety, is perhaps still more disastrous, springs the religion of those who fulfil their duties toward men, and seem to imagine that they have none to fulfil toward God. The chief defect in their religion is, that it happens to be no religion at all. Religion supposes before everything the worship of God, and in this pretended religion men live as though there were no God; they do not think of Him, they do not render Him any worship, they do not pray to Him, and, more than all, they do not love Him. It is very right and very necessary to fulfil all the duties of social life, the natural duties of father, husband, son, and citizen, but that is not sufficient, and it is absolutely necessary that each one who desires to accomplish his destiny in this world should live to God, and render to Him each day a tribute of adoration, prayer, devotion, obedience, and, more than all, of love. The service of God should be the one great interest in the life of every rational being; the love of God should be the first and principal emotion of the heart predominating over every other. If you ignore this rule you are no Christian, you are among the number of those who live for this world only, while your destiny is to live eternally and to use the world only as a means of reaching heaven.

Alas! how many pagans there are in the midst of us, how many Christians who are Christians only by baptism and by name!

The first commandment of God is, perhaps, the most disregarded,

and the least understood in our century; and yet it is the most important of all. It commands us to adore, to love, and to serve Him who gives us existence, who gives us the mind with which we think, the heart with which we love, the will with which we direct our life. God gives us all that we are, all that we have, our soul as well as our body; and, as He destines us for the possession of Himself in heaven, it is surely not hard to understand that He desires us to render Him in this world all the homage that is His due. This homage, this worship, is what we call religion. There is but one true religion, because there is but one God, and this true religion is the Christian or Catholic religion. It is therefore by being a good Christian, a good and faithful Catholic, that we may render to our Heavenly Father all that we owe Him, and, by so doing, perfectly fulfil the designs and intention of God.

To adore God is to acknowledge Him as the infinite, supreme, eternal Being who made all things, and upon whom all things depend; it is to annihilate ourselves before His sovereign greatness, and to acknowledge, with deep humility, that all we have comes from Him, and that without Him we should not ever exist. We must adore God alone, because He alone is the Creator and the sovereign Lord of all things. Jesus Christ, God incarnate, must be adored because He is God as well as man. We may not adore the Blessed Virgin, nor the Saints and Angels, still less their images. The Blessed Virgin, in fact, although the Mother of Jesus Christ, and consequently the Mother of God, is, nevertheless, only a simple creature of the great Creator whom alone we must adore. The Angels and Saints are only His servants, and it is entirely on account of the fidelity with which they have served Him that we honor, love, and reverence them.

To adore any creature, no matter whom, in the place of God, or even at the same time as God, would be to commit a horrible and abominable sin which is called idolatry. The Catholic Church has already destroyed idolatry throughout Europe, and in many parts of the other continents: her missionaries brave martyrdom and death only to destroy idolatry throughout the earth, and to restore to Jesus Christ, who is the true and living God, the homage unjustly paid to false divinities.

To serve God is to do His holy will in every action of life: it is to be to Jesus Christ just what a good and faithful servant is to his master. He cares for his master's interests, carries out his orders to the best of his power, defends him when he is attacked, never suffers

any one to speak ill of him, seeks to please him in all things, and to avoid everything which could offend him. Behold what it is to serve God; even so is He served by good and faithful Christians, by men who are devoted to Jesus, and who clearly discern the end for which they are on earth.

The service of God is the great object of life, the one paramount duty and interest of man.

To love God is to feel that He is in truth our heavenly Father, and to render Him a heart which ever beats with that divine emotion which He Himself has given us, and which we call love. Cold and ungrateful beyond words must be the nature which feels no love for Jesus, who is infinite perfection, infinite goodness, all tenderness and mercy, and ineffable sweetness. To love God is to commence on earth what we shall continue eternally in heaven. It is impossible that we should even possess true peace, true joy, or true happiness without this love by which the whole life is purified and ennobled.

If we love God let us prove our love in every word and action. "If you love Me," He says to us in the Gospel, "keep My commandments." If we love God, let us often think of Him with joy and with tenderness; let us often say to Him: "My God, I love Thee above all things." Let us mingle this feeling of love for God without most ordinary actions, and do everything with the habitual desire to please Him, and to accomplish His holy will.

To adore God, to love Him, and to serve Him: such is the spirit of the first commandment.

PRAYER.

WE cannot be Christians, or please God, without His grace; that is to say, without being united to Jesus Christ His Son; and this grace, this life-giving union, we can only obtain by prayer and the holy sacraments.

What, then, is prayer? How many people are mistaken upon this point, and, counting as prayer that which is very far from being prayer, imagine that to serve God and to pray to Him it is necessary to have nothing else to do, to go to church all day long, and a thousand other things quite out of question for any man who is obliged to gain his living by untiring work day after day!

To pray is to think of God by loving Him, adoring Him, thanking Him for all His benefits, and asking from Him with confidence all the graces which we need.

Prayer is an act of the heart and of the mind, which is possible under all circumstances, in the midst of work, and of all the different occupations in which we may be employed. What can prevent us while we are going and coming in the streets and in the fields, while we are engaged in the labors of our calling, in the morning when going to our work, in the evening when returning from it; during the night when we awake, from lifting our heart and thoughts to Jesus Christ ever present in the depths of the soul, and from saying to Him: My God, I love Thee and adore Thee. I unite my work and all my cares to Thy sufferings. Pardon my sins; have pity on my weakness. Bless my work, and teach me to love Thee; or any such simple and heartfelt prayers as these? And I can assure you, moreover, that these are the best of all prayers, that they are those to which God listens with most pleasure, because they are more natural, and because they express the truest, deepest feelings of Religion.

Those formulas of prayer which are called vocal prayers, and which are to be found in works of devotion, are very useful means of rousing our hearts to prayer; but, we must not forget that these are not true prayers, unless we lift the heart as well as move the lips, when we are engaged in reciting them. It is well to use them, but we must only use them as a means of praying better. What is the good of praying? people sometimes say. Does not God know my wants without my telling Him? Yes, God does know all we need. But not only does He desire that we should tell Him all our wants and cares, as children to their father, and as servants to their master, but more than this, we know well that prayer does not merely consist of asking from God just what we need for soul and body. For this is only the least sublime part of that great act which we call prayer. More than all else, to pray is to adore God, it is to offer the profound homage of creatures who only exist by His Almighty power, of servants who are only placed on earth to render Him their service and to accomplish His holy will, of children whom He loves as a most tender father and who return Him love for love.

Love and adoration—these are the two principal acts of prayer, and the very foundation of the Christian life.

Not only must we adore God and love Him, but we must also pray to thank Him for all the benefits with which He overwhelms us, and especially for the love with which He deigns to regard us, and for the happiness which He prepares for us, if we are faithful to Him. This act of thanksgiving is again superior to an act of suppli-

cation. Lastly, among all supplications, properly so-called, there is one with which none of us can dispense, and that is the supplication we offer up to God to obtain the pardon of our sins, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our most merciful Saviour.

It is therefore necessary to pray, to think often of God, and often to express the love and reverence with which our hearts are filled. But it is especially needful to pray in the morning and in the evening; at the commencement of the day which God has given us, to consecrate it all to Him, and at the end of the day, to thank Jesus for the graces He has given us during the course of it, and to ask His forgiveness of the sins we have perhaps committed.

And let us never forget to pray when we are tempted to do wrong; prayer at such a time resembles the shield with which the warrior arms himself in order to resist the attacks of the enemy. Lastly, let us always pray with attention and reverence, with confidence, humility, and perseverance. He who prays not thus prays badly, and is not heard by God. When we are reciting prayers, the rosary for instance, let us be very careful to pray with the spirit of recollection, with the heart and mind ever lifted up to God, and not merely with the movement of the lips. May our divine Lord and Saviour grant you the grace of prayer, cause you to love it, and to find the practice of it sweet and easy! You will derive from it the sanctification of your life, purity of heart, the secret of true joy, and the only consolation in sorrow; and, with the help of prayer, you will become a true servant of God.

FAITH AND PATIENCE IN PRAYER.

WE must pray; it is the command of God; it is the clearly expressed will of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The man who prays saves his soul; he who does not pray lives without God, is no Christian, and will assuredly be lost.

But it is not enough to pray; we must pray with faith and perseverance. Sometimes men will begin to pray; but being fully persuaded that divine things are governed by the same law as human things, they immediately desire to find the answer to their prayer close within their reach. Seeing no result, they imagine that their prayer is useless, and thus fall into a state of discouragement. They do not know that prayer is an act of faith, and requires before all things that men should believe in its power, even when they perceive no immediate effects. How many earnest prayers, fully heard by

God, have produced no fruits for a very long time, and sometimes not until after centuries! At the last judgment, this mystery will be revealed to us, and we shall then see the marvellous effects that have been worked by Christian prayer.

Think of the prayer of St. Stephen, when he was being stoned. This prayer wrought the conversion of St. Paul, who was yet a Jew, and who took charge of the garments of his persecutors. Now imagine all the good that was done by St. Paul, who converted whole nations by preaching the Christian religion throughout the world, and by instructing the faithful. And yet, may not all the good of which St. Paul was the author, and which is still developing century after century, be clearly traced back to St. Stephen, who by his prayer changed the persecutor into an Apostle? Thus, your prayers may perhaps be asked for the conversion of some young man who is living a very wild and reckless life. For this end, you pray with all your heart, recite several chaplets, visit some sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin, and make one or two good communions; after a certain length of time, very often without your knowledge, and even after your death, this young man returns to God, gives himself up to good works, cares for the poor, goes still further and becomes a priest or a missionary, converts a great number of souls, and during the course of a long life does an immense amount of good. And is not all this the fruit of your prayer, that prayer of which you were never able to see any effects, and which you were perhaps tempted to regard as useless? It is to you, and to your prayers, that this young man owes his conversion, and you will share his reward. How great the loss, if you had not prayed, or if you had prayed badly! Mothers of families, you have asked of God, in all your daily prayers, the gift of perseverance for your sons and daughters in the path of holiness. Now, looking down the stream of time, behold them grown up and married, and becoming in their turn the fathers and mothers of families, then bringing up their children in the right and Christian way; children who shall, later on, become themselves the centres of Christian homes, and thus ever on in endless succession. Mark the power of your prayer which reaches unto numerous generations. Sometimes God appears to refuse what we ask of Him. Patience! the day will surely come in which we shall reap the hidden fruits of every holy effort, fruits of great sanctification for ourselves, for the long-continued prayer, apparently so barren, shall have caused us to persevere and to advance in holiness; and then, on the other hand, who can tell from how many sins, from how many occa-

sions of falling, we may have saved the object of our prayers, though a perverse will may still form an obstacle in the path of complete conversion?

When we ask for our neighbor temporal good, health, or riches, or deliverance from some great calamity, there is yet one other striking reflection to be made. This sickness, this life of poverty, this grief, is precisely the means made use of by God to save the soul of him for whom you pray. Then is it not necessary for his true good, which is known to God far better than to you, that you should not obtain what you ask? Will your prayers therefore be lost? Far from it: they are, first for yourself, and then for your neighbor, an abundant source of graces far superior to those temporal blessings for which you have asked.

We might easily multiply examples, but the little we have said will suffice, I hope, to reanimate your faith in prayer. Pray with confidence; pray with deep human sympathy, and do not forget the counsel we have given when you lift your heart in prayer to God.

THE GREAT MISSION OF PRAYER.

WHEN Jesus desired to establish His Church in this world, He chose twelve poor fishermen; and it was by instruments as weak as these, and as apparently ineffectual, that He willed to convert men, and that He did, in fact, convert them.

Just what Jesus did in the beginning, He does still, each day; and He gives to every one among us, however weak and insignificant we may be, a divine mission in the midst of His Church.

He intrusts His interests to us, He desires that we should all work for His glory, by procuring the salvation of our brethren. It is true that we ourselves are only very unworthy sinners, and it seems as if our own weaknesses and failures were so manifold that they might well prevent us from troubling about the salvation of others. And yet God requires of us that we should try to save our brethren. What then shall we do? Shall we go and preach in the public places? If we are workmen, servants, laborers, shall we leave our workshops, and our work, and exhort all sinners to do penance? Decidedly this is not what God expects of us. What then shall we do? Listen: we must pray. It is by prayer that we can accomplish our work. We must pray for each other; this is the command of God, and the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul. This is a truth often forgotten in these days, and the self-interest which

pervades and intermingles with all that we do is very often the cause of the little progress that we make in the service of God. How many among the faithful lament that they do not advance in virtue, that they gain no greater mastery over their passions, over their evil inclinations, over their self-love! They stand to-day just where they stood last year, and thus they grow discouraged. This is entirely because they are selfish, and only think of themselves when they pray. One would imagine, that beyond their own narrow limits there was nothing which concerned the glory of Jesus Christ. They never pray for their neighbor, and this want of charity hardens the heart and closes it against the grace of God.

If we did but consider the first words of our daily prayer, Our Father, that alone would suffice to remind us that we are all members of one great family, and that consequently the good of our brethren should be to us even as our own. We do not say, My Father, who art in heaven, . . . give me my daily bread . . . forgive me my trespasses. . . . But, by the command of God Himself, we say, Our Father, give us . . . forgive us. . . . Is it not clear that God, by teaching us to pray in this manner, desired us to have at heart the interests of all men, who are His children and our brethren?

Sometimes we do not know what to say to God when we desire to pray. Yet subjects for prayer are far from wanting. Think, for instance, who has greater need of assistance than our Holy Father the Pope, who is intrusted by Jesus Christ to govern the whole Church, and to decide all great questions relating to the glory of God? And whence is this assistance to come, if not from the prayers of those who belong to his great spiritual family? Must not the son always endeavor to help and comfort the father? I would say as much of all bishops, priests, and missionaries, and especially of the bishop of your own diocese, and of the priest of your own parish, who is charged by the bishop to teach the law of God, thus enabling you to avoid sin, and to save your soul, by becoming a true Christian. If the faithful of every diocese and every parish had but more charity and greater earnestness, if they prayed every day for the conversion of the irreligious, for the perseverance of their brethren in the faith, do you not believe that the efforts of our priests would be crowned with greater success, and that God would be better served?

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Pray, therefore; pray much, and pray often for the Pope, for bishops,

and for priests; pray for the conversion of sinners, and for the sanctification of the just, especially for those of your own country, of your parish, and of your own family. Who can tell that the salvation of your father, of your mother, of your husband, or your wife, of your child, or of your friend, does not hang upon that prayer which you are tempted to neglect? We shall one day learn, with deep confusion and bitter grief, how many souls we might have saved by the simplest means and by the easiest prayers: then the time will be past. Now that you have still the power, begin at once, and make reparation for the time you have lost. Determine that you will always add to your morning and evening prayers some special prayer for your neighbor; a memorare for instance, or even a decade of the rosary, for the Pope, for your bishop, for your parish priest, and for your confessor; for success to the preaching of missionaries over the whole earth, for the conversion of Protestants who do not know the true religion; pray for your country, and for those who govern it, that God may guide them in the right way, give them wisdom, and bless their efforts for the public good.

Believe me, if you will but pray thus, you will soon know by experience how good and useful it is to think of others, and to cultivate a universal sympathy; God will bless you, and will give you many great graces which you would not obtain, if, with a selfishness that is only too common, you thought of no one but yourself in your prayers.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THE second commandment God gave Himself upon Mount Sinai to His servant Moses; and when He came to dwell among us, the God of heaven and earth renewed this self-same law: "Swear not at all," He says in the Gospel, "but let your speech be Yea, yea; No, no: and that which is over and above these is of evil." And in the beautiful prayer which He Himself bequeathed to the world, Jesus commanded that, before all else, the sacred name of God should be hallowed and glorified: "Hallowed be Thy name!"

It is not necessary to insist upon the entire reasonableness of this divine law. Since God is the infinitely perfect Being, unutterably worthy of the deepest reverence and adoration, the very least that we can do is to speak with reverence His holy name. To pronounce the name of Jesus heedlessly, is to speak heedlessly of God Himself; to insult, blaspheme, or curse this adorable name is to insult and

curse the Lord. What could be more guilty? What could be greater madness? It is the vessel of potter's clay rebelling against the hand that formed it.

There are many different ways of sinning against the second commandment. The most grievous is that of which we have just spoken, viz., an outrage, or malediction uttered openly against God. This crime, for which in the ancient law men were immediately condemned to death and stoned, is, thank God, exceedingly rare.

It is very seldom that even those who are so carried away by passion as to utter words of blasphemy do really intend to curse God. If ever in the streets, or in your workshops, or in any company that you frequent, you should hear any of these terrible maledictions, never forget, if you are powerless to silence the blasphemer, to lift your heart to God, and to offer to Him a prayer of reparation; saying to Him, My God, may Thy holy name be blessed and glorified; forgive them, for they know not what they do!

There is a great difference between blasphemy and swearing by the name of God. A blasphemy is far more guilty than an oath, although the latter is most reprehensible. An oath consists of taking the name of God in vain; but a blasphemy implies a clear outrage, a direct insult, unless it is not truly uttered with a deliberate intention of evil; an undoubted blasphemy is a grievous sin, while an oath seldom reaches an equal degree of guilt. The workmen of the present day have almost all very evil habits in this respect. They drag the name of God into their common conversation, as if this forbidden word gave effect and piquancy to their discourse. There are those with whom this evil habit is so deeply rooted that they can scarcely speak a single sentence without bringing in the name of God. Parents and masters who suffer their children to fall into this coarse and impious language are deeply guilty, and will have to answer for it before God. If you should be among the number of those who have contracted such a habit, strive hard to correct yourself of it. Every day, when you say your morning prayer, renew your resolution not to swear; and if, by misfortune, you forget yourself, ask forgiveness of God directly you have perceived your fault. With a firm will and a little perseverance you will soon cease to swear at all.

Any one may be guilty of blasphemy without positively reviling the holy name of God. Hence, it would be a blasphemy to accuse God of cruelty or injustice, or even to say that God does not trouble

Himself about us, but abandons us to ourselves. Sometimes an excess of despair will cause us to give vent to words of this description, and they would constitute a very grievous sin if ungovernable grief did not partly excuse them. It would also be an utter blasphemy to say to a creature, when under the influence of passion, that you loved them more than God, that, for you, they held the place of God; or any mad words of this description, which may sometimes be met with in dangerous romances.

It is a blasphemy to revile religion, or the things of God; to rail, for instance, against the Blessed Sacrament, or the worship of the Blessed Virgin, or against images and the relics of the saints; to turn into derision the words of Holy Scripture, religious doctrines, or the ceremonies of divine worship. Blasphemy is a sin which is more or less grievous according to circumstances and the sanctity of the object blasphemed. There are many expressions familiar among people who have been badly brought up, the use of which does not certainly always involve sin, but which Christians should never allow themselves to utter.

Remember and practise these rules. Reverence with your whole heart all that relates to the Lord your God, and never lose sight of the second commandment of the divine law: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

In 1849 a terrible storm broke over the town of Toulouse. In the midst of it, two men might have been seen coming out of the door of a well-known public house, of which they were constant inhabitants. It was evident that they had been drinking much too freely, and they were now engaged in a noisy discussion upon different religious questions. They both prided themselves on their liberal opinions, and gloried in the name of free-thinkers; and as they walked on through the storm the thunder which rolled incessantly over their heads seemed to lash them up into a kind of senseless fury. Blasphemies of every description came from their lips, until at last one of them even dared to lift his clenched hand threateningly to heaven: "I defy Thee," he cried out, "strike me if Thou canst." The words were barely uttered, when the lightning flashed, and struck him where he stood, and stretched him motionless upon the earth. His terrified companion cast himself upon his knees, and prayed aloud for mercy; and when he had recovered from his fright, he placed his companion on his shoulders and carried him to a house close by, where he returned to consciousness after many hours. We do not know whether he profited by this lesson, but it must be ac-

knowledge that it would have been difficult for God to give one more prompt or more significant.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

God desired to preserve the true religion in a world which grew ever more and more corrupt, and therefore He chose for Himself a people to whom He gave certain special commandments.

Among these there was one which predominated over all the others, and the observance of which was designed to recall to man his entire dependence upon God. Whoever violated this commandment was punished with death; he was dragged, as one accursed, without the walls of the town, and, by the order of God Himself, was stoned to death.

This great commandment was the sanctification of the seventh day of the week. Upon that day the faithful were forbidden to employ themselves in any manual work; and they were bound to consecrate this day of bodily rest to special prayer, to the worship of God, to reading and meditation on the divine Word.

In the ancient law, this day of sacred repose, the day of the Lord was the Saturday, and not, as with us, the Sunday. The Saturday had been chosen by God in remembrance of the creation of the world, which had been completed in six days; on the seventh day, which answers to the Saturday, the divine work had ceased, and it was in memory of this rest of the Lord that the Jews were to celebrate the Saturday.

In the new law, Sunday has been substituted for Saturday, even as the Christian Church has been substituted for the Jewish Church. Sunday is indeed a day far greater and more holy, and the mysteries that it recalls are still more worthy of gratitude than the glorious mystery of creation.

On Sunday our divine Redeemer rose from the dead, victorious by this crowning miracle over death and sin and Satan; and it was on Sunday that He solemnly instituted His Church, by sending down upon her the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. By the sanctification of Sunday, Christians consecrate to God, in accordance with the primitive law, one day in the week; and they continually revive in their hearts the remembrance of those mysteries of love by which the Son of God wrought the redemption of the human race.

Sundays, and also the holy days of obligation, are observed by the

practice of two principal rules: first, by hearing mass; second, by resting from servile works.

I. By hearing mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, under pain of mortal sin. The mass, which is the unbloody sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is the principal action, and the centre, as it were, of all divine worship. It is the great prayer of the Christian religion; it is the one supreme act of adoration and thanksgiving which we render to God through Jesus Christ His Son.

In parishes where there are many priests, and consequently many masses, the obligation is satisfied by hearing low mass. But as the high mass is the common gathering of all the children of God at the feet of their heavenly Father, every one should be present unless positively prevented; and so much the more, because this mass is said for the faithful of the parish, and it is at this alone that all recommendations, public prayers, announcements, and publications are made, and that a sermon or instruction is given.

It is necessary to hear the whole of the mass from the beginning to the end. Those who enter the church after the reading of the Gospel do not satisfy the obligation, and are bound to hear another mass. Those who arrive after the mass has begun, but before the Gospel, do certainly fulfil the command of hearing mass, but they commit a fault unless their delay was involuntary.

To observe this precept in the right way, it is necessary to behave becomingly during the holy sacrifice, to pray to God, and, in a word, to conform a serious act of religion. It is also forbidden to laugh, to look about, and even to speak without necessity in church.

Any one who chattered or slept during the whole of mass, or during a considerable part of it, would not fulfil the law, and would be obliged to assist with more devotion at another mass. Vespers, benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the sermon, and other public devotions, are not positively commanded, but it is far better not to neglect them, and they offer the best means of keeping holy the Sundays and festivals. It is a very happy thing to see the faithful gathered together in great numbers in the church, lifting up both heart and voice, with one accord, in praise to God, and thus, by one united prayer, drawing down upon their parish heavenly benedictions. Parents and masters should accustom children to assist at the different offices of the Church with reverence and devotion. Who does not love to hear the pure fresh voices of little children lifted up to God in singing psalms and hymns?

II. In order to keep holy Sundays and holy days, it is not suffi-

cient to go to mass, or even to go to mass and vespers; it is also necessary to abstain from servile work. By servile work is especially understood the labor in which workmen, tradesmen, and day-laborers are engaged, since that is quite incompatible with the holy rest of the Sunday. Work which only occupies the mind, such as reading, etc., is not servile work, and is, consequently not forbidden. Neither does the commandment forbid that work which is necessary for the maintenance of life, nor that which is required for the ceremonies of divine worship. Thus servants may conscientiously perform all their necessary duties, and those who are employed about a church may clean and put it in order, arrange the altars, ring the bells, etc.

With the exception of the necessities of life, it is also forbidden to buy and sell on Sundays and holy days. All shops should be closed, except chemists', inns, butchers', grocers', bakers', and generally speaking all shops of provisions; also every one must be able to go to church, the person who keeps the house being alone exempt.

Still, as it is impossible to provide for all cases, and as the practice of these rules must vary according to country and circumstance, it is always necessary to be guided by the opinion of a priest in any case of doubt or uncertainty. Masters or mistresses who, without real necessity, prevent those in their employment or service from hearing mass, and who oblige them to work, commit a very grievous sin, and are responsible before God for the omission, as well as for the scandal they have caused.

The non-observance of this law is one of the scourges of our time, and if we do not make a successful effort against this lamentable disobedience, the justice of God will assuredly fall heavily upon us. The Lord no longer condemns the disobedient to be stoned, but He prepares for them a terrible judgment, and the eternal punishment of hell. God is not mocked with impunity! sooner or later He asserts His sovereignty as the Lord and Master of the whole earth.

Therefore, render a heartfelt obedience to this great and holy law, and keep this third commandment of God deeply engraven on your memory: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day."

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

OUR LORD said to us all on the day before His Passion, "I have given you an example, that as I have done so you do also." He is not only Our Lord and Saviour; He is also our perfect Example.

Among all the holy virtues of which He left us a pattern, there is one which He practised during the whole of His life, and the imitation of which is, for that reason, imperative upon all Christians: His reverence and obedience toward His mother and His adopted father. During His childhood, His youth, and even in His manhood, Jesus was subject in all humility to Mary and to Joseph; and, during the thirty years He passed at Nazareth, the Gospel tells us nothing of Him except that He was subject to His parents. "*Et erat subditus illis.*"

Our Lord thus practised the fourth commandment in the law of God His Father: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Like Him we should honor our parents; that is, we should reverence them and obey them, assist them in all their necessities, and surround them with care and affection. Let us reverence our parents, let us always reverence them, and never lose sight of the fact that they are the authors of our life, and that to them is intrusted the paternal authority of God Himself. A father and a mother should be always regarded with the deepest reverence; in their relations to their children they are invested with an inviolable truly sacred character, being representatives of the fatherhood and the providence of God. In the ancient law, he who struck or cursed his father or mother was considered as guilty of sacrilege, and, by the order of God, was punished with death. Even when our parents are not what they should be, we are bound to honor them, and the reason is very simple; good or bad, kind or unnatural, a father remains always a father; and therefore, because he is a father, and not because he is a good father, he has a right to the reverence of his children.

I know that, in practice, it is very difficult to recognize in a father or a mother who are unworthy of this holy name the representatives of the authority of God; but in this case faith must come to the help of nature, and it is for the sake of obedience to God that we must render to this father or this mother the honor and obedience that God Himself commands. How rare a thing this is in our time! As the result of a system of education which is wanting both in depth and in Christianity, the relation of children to their parents is almost everywhere one of deplorable freedom. They speak to them with most unbecoming familiarity; they calmly set aside their commands; they resist their authority and often clamor for their own will and opinions, until the home becomes a scene of turmoil and strife; and finally, they do not hesitate to discuss them with their friends and to criticise their actions in a most unwarrantable manner.

It is an imperative duty to honor our parents; but, by the fourth commandment, we are equally bound to obey them. For the authority of our father and our mother is a true and real authority of divine right, ordained by God Himself, who is the author and originator of family life. In all that is not clearly sin, a son is therefore bound to obey his parents; in everything that regards home education and choice of a position in life. This obedience must be more or less absolute according to the age of the child; as he grows older, it gradually becomes a kind of respectful deference, which should always accompany the relations of a son with his father, in whatever position, and under all circumstances. It need not be said that, if our parents should forget their duty and should command us to commit a sin, they would no longer have any claim on our obedience, because their voice would no longer be for us the outward expression of the divine will. Honor and obedience do therefore constitute the first duty of a son toward his father and mother.

Is this all? No, we must also love our parents, we must show them constantly a filial tenderness, an unselfish affection, and must prove to them in all their trials that we share their griefs, and that our hearts are touched by all that affects them. If the near relationship of a father and a mother constitute a visible providence for their children, the children should, in their turn, be the consolation of their parents, and render them care for care and love for love.

Is there anything holier or happier than to see a young man full of reverence and affection for his father, attentive to his mother's slightest wish, preferring their society to the companionship of young men of his own age, and caring more for the happiness of his own home life than for the pleasures and dissipations of the world? Such characteristics as these are the signs of true nobility of nature, and are deserving of the highest possible praise.

Is it necessary to add that children are bound to assist their parents in their necessities, and to do anything in their power rather than allow them to endure privation? For many years they have received from them food and clothing, the necessities and often the superfluities of life; often hard work alone has been able to furnish the patient father and the devoted mother with resources sufficient to bring up their family; is it not most just that the children in their turn should provide for the wants of their parents, and should thus render to them all that they have themselves received? Woe to the worthless and ungrateful children who forget and neglect their pa-

rents in their old age, and who thus close their hearts to the truest instincts of nature as well as to the teachings of religion!

Let us render, therefore, a sacred reverence, a religious and perfect obedience, an unselfish and unbounded love to those to whom we are united by this holy tie. Such is the law of God. Let us never forget to pray for them each day, so that, by the mercy of God, we may all be happily reunited in heaven. Our father and mother were the instruments by which God created us, and brought us into this world; and He created us only that He might thus bestow upon us an eternal happiness hereafter. It is there, even in the bosom of the eternal Godhead, that our heavenly Father desires to gather the whole family together, when the labors of life are done; it is there that He desires to unite us to those who have gone before us; and it is there that He desires to bestow on us not only a long life, but an eternal life—the life which He promises to those who keep the fourth commandment. “Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land.”

TO FATHERS AND MOTHERS.

FATHERS and mothers, you are the visible divinities of your children. They see none greater than you, they see none so often as you, they love no one so much as you. They often hear of God, of the Pope, of the king, but they do not see them; while they have you every day before their eyes as the living models of their actions. You are everything for them. The life which they have derived from you they preserve only by your care, and you are their sole dependence for the future. Now, a child has much of the monkey in its nature; it imitates, it repeats all that it sees, all that it hears. This is especially the case with regard to its father and mother. Its great ambition is to imitate them in all they do. From this fact there arises for fathers and mothers a binding obligation to lead good and holy lives themselves, that their children may thus follow them in the right way.

The heart of a child is as wax, capable of receiving any impression, good or bad; it is as plain white linen, upon which all colors may be stamped. It is to parents that God has intrusted the care of impressing on these young pure hearts all true and virtuous feelings—those first impressions which are never completely effaced. If they are careful to inculcate in their children the sentiment of duty, the love and fear of God, a horror of sin, and the necessity of religion,

they lay the foundation of the future happiness of these little ones whom the providence of God has confided to their care. If they do not do all this, the hearts of their children become as land which is neither tilled nor planted, as land which was ready to bring forth fruit, but which, for want of care and labor, produces nothing but briars and thorns.

And how great is the providence of God in this! The child thus unconsciously becomes in its turn a means of salvation to its parents. Obligated to teach the right, not only in words but also by example, they often find themselves drawn on to do, in the sight of their child, some good action which they would otherwise have neglected, and to avoid a thousand faults which might have an evil influence on the innocence of their child.

During a violent religious persecution in the empire of Japan, two Christians were every day expecting martyrdom, and were preparing themselves by fervent prayer. They had only one child, scarcely five years old. The tender age of their little boy, whom they would so soon be obliged to leave alone and unprotected upon earth, was the cause of their deepest anxiety. Speaking one day on this sad subject, they were saying to each other: "With the grace of God we shall have strength to suffer and even to die for our faith, but what will become of this poor little one? Ignorant of the things of God, and of the holiness of the religion of Jesus Christ, will he not renounce it at the first threat, or rather at the first command?" During their conversation the child seemed to be amusing himself without noticing anything they said. He was playing with an iron and stirring about the coals in the fireplace. When the iron was red-hot, he drew it out, and, turning toward his parents without speaking, he placed it on his hand and left it there. "What are you doing, my dear child?" cried the terrified mother. "I wanted to show you," said the little fellow gravely, "that with God's help I shall be able to bear pain as well as you, rather than give up the religion that you practise." The father and mother embraced him tenderly, shedding tears of joy, and thanking God for having given them such a child. A few days after they were seized by the persecutors, and, remaining faithful unto death, received together with their child the palm of martyrdom. Thus were they rewarded for the good teaching and the constant care which they had given to this holy child, who so happily profited by the sacred lessons he received.

The widow of a Chinese mandarin, converted by our missionaries, had one little girl, an only child still of a very tender age. She led

her one day into her oratory, and kneeling before the crucifix prayed silently; then turning to her child, who was kneeling at her side, she said, "God only knows how much I love you, my dear little one; you are my only treasure upon earth, and the only pledge of his affection that your father left to me when dying; but if I believed it possible that you could ever abandon Jesus Christ, or lose your innocence, I would ask God to take you to Himself, to call you instantly out of this world. Very far from weeping for you, I would array myself as for a festival, and would esteem your death as a great blessing and favor from God."

These words recall those spoken by Queen Blanche to St. Louis, her son, during his childhood: "I would rather see you die before my eyes, than see you commit a single sin." All Christian mothers should constantly repeat them to their children.

There are fathers and mothers who lose, and there are those who save their children. Their loss or ruin will be their own loss, while their salvation will surely prove their own also.

Like father, like son; and still more, like mother, like child. If you love your children, fathers and mothers, if not for yourselves at least for love of them, be good Christians, scrupulously observe the laws of God and of His Church; avoid sin, repress your passions, consider your words, be constant in prayer, swear not, do not argue and dispute, guard against anger; reverence all that relates to God, His ministers, and His temple; so live that your child may need nothing but your daily example to guide him now in the path of right, and that hereafter the memory of his childhood may be still a pure and holy influence to draw him nearer heaven.

EARLY EDUCATION.

THE bear's cub, when first brought into the world, is merely a shapeless mass; neither head nor eyes can be distinguished. The father and mother, impelled by the instinct God has given them, instantly begin to lick their young one vigorously, and thus in a manner they fashion this imperfect body, and through their care and patience, little by little, the head, the eyes, and the claws of the cub appear, and it begins to assume its natural shape.

If parents will pardon this comparison, we would propose this example to them. When God gives them a child, He gives them at the same time a mission to fashion, to form it for good, and to make it in all things a Christian child. With bears, it is the tongue that

performs this work of formation; with men, it is also the tongue which should be their instrument in this great work, not by licking certainly, but by speaking. What may not be done by the words, the influence of a father and a mother! The nature of the child is utterly in their hands and is ready to receive any impression: if these are good and holy, the heart of the little child will be formed according to the will of God; it will be pure and loving, and good and true; if, on the contrary, the pliable character of the child is warped and misdirected from the very beginning, a germ of evil will be planted in the soul, and the poor child will grow up with defects which will quickly deform, and will finally prove its destruction.

Therefore, spare no trouble, fathers and mothers, in this first work, this first influence over the minds of your children; the impressions of childhood are never completely effaced. Education begins from the cradle, and on the mother's knees. Teach your child first of all, to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him; teach him to lisp the sacred name of Jesus, and the holy name of Mary; guide the little innocent hand to make the holy sign of the cross, even before the child can understand its meaning; and in all the simple stories that you tell him, strive to teach him something of the history of Our Lord, and of the lives of the saints. A little girl of four or five years old was sitting one day on her father's knee, when she clasped her arms round his neck, and kissed him repeatedly. "Do you love me so very much?" he asked her. "Oh, yes!" answered the child; "I do love you dearly, but I love God best." Never spoil your children by a blind and foolish affection. There is much meaning in the words, to spoil a child. To spoil a work is to ruin it, to render it useless, to destroy it; and this is exactly what is done by those weak and mistaken parents who spoil their children, that is to say, by those who neglect to foster a constant sense of duty, who yield to all their caprices, who indulge them foolishly and systematically, who allow them to fall into habits of waywardness, ill-temper, impertinence, greediness, and curiosity; in one word, who caress when they are bound to punish, and, consequently, never fail in the end to make these little people perfectly unbearable.

In our own age, in town and country, among rich and poor, it is an almost universal custom for the children to be lords and masters in the house, and to see both father and mother at their knees. This is the world turned upside down; spoilt children can never be anything but indifferent men, even if they escape being something worse.

The Apostle of the Classroom.

ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, burning with zeal for the salvation of souls, afflicted beyond measure at the thought of the sins and the waywardness of men, was not, however, destined to traverse the boundless seas, or to tear down temples or overturn idols in pagan lands; neither was he called upon to cut his way through the trackless forests in search of souls. In the all-wise designs of God, he was to enter another



MARBLE STATUE OF ST. DE LA SALLE. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, NEW YORK.

land, as much in need of a hero with an apostle's zeal and a martyr's spirit as the darkest continent ever entered by the minister of the gospel. This land, that awaited its apostle, was the classroom. Here, indeed, many a time-honored idol raised its head covered with the dust of the routine of ages. Here, indeed, was a vast territory, teeming with a population as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore. The land was worthy of the apostle. Besides the love of God, the one who would effect any lasting good in the class-room must also be possessed of

a deep love for the child. He must be in touch with the child's joys and sorrows; he must carefully study child-nature, and search out the hidden springs of action in the depths of the child's soul.

The Patron of Christian Schools.

THE present engraving is from a composition and oil painting, size twenty-eight feet by fourteen, by Brother Arille, artist, professor of painting, drawing and design, Pensionnat des Freres, Reims, France.



THE GLORIFICATION OF SAINT JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE.

that St. de La Salle should be proclaimed the model for Christian Professors, the Patron of Christian Schools, and the Protector of Youth.

St. de La Salle is here represented blessing the world. The three angels on the upper right hand bear emblems of the vows of Religion, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience; those on the left have the emblems of the Priesthood, Prayer, and the Apostolic Mission of the Christian Educator. The structures represented are St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, the Cathedral of Reims, and the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem. It is fitting that in this day, when the question of education is uppermost,

The franciscan Order, founded in 1223.

are conservative, have fine teaching traditions, and adopt the new only when it has proved itself worthy. Without endowment, the Jesuits have managed to establish a good university at Georgetown, and the Notre Dame institution was begun and carried on in the same way ; two instances that illustrate the powerful resources of well-ordered communities.

The charity work is entirely in the hands of the lay communities, for the sacerdotal bodies do not enter this field. The care of hospitals, orphan asylums, refuges, and protectories for men and boys engages the time and skill of half the entire body of community laymen. The most remarkable example of what they are able to do in fair circumstances is the Protectory at Westchester, in the suburbs of New York, which is said by experts to be the most successful of its kind in the world. In this home the Christian Brothers care for nearly two thousand boys, and give them a good training in various trades and employments.

Almost all the sacerdotal communities take their share in the parochial and mission work of the country ; sometimes because it is part of their rule so to do, or because of the pressing need of the people. The Jesuits have a well-defined system in this regard. Their college and church are usually inseparable. If



A FRANCISCAN FRIAR—THIS ORDER, FOUNDED BY ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, AS A MENDICANT MISSIONARY ORDER, IS DISTINGUISHED BY ITS GRAY OR DARK BROWN COWL, A GIRDLE AND SANDALS.

The Society of Jesus.

they must choose, the college gets the preference, since the higher education of their own members and of the laity is their chief aim. Circumstances change this rule, as in the case of the Western missions, where they have only three colleges, but look after one hundred and twenty poor parishes that would otherwise lack proper care. The Jesuits are very proud of their Indian missions, as they have good reason to be. In the same way the Benedictines look after two hundred parishes through the West and South; the Capuchins also spare some members for the work, together with the Vincentians, Augustinians, and Franciscans. Perhaps the Cistercians alone, familiarly known as Trappists, adhere strictly to their own convents according to rule, and avoid parish work. Theirs is a contemplative community, whose members keep a life-long silence, practise vegetarianism on one meal a day, and cultivate the fields without and the learned studies within for the sake of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. The most peculiar work which the missionaries perform is the preaching of missions to the common people and retreats to the nuns and clergy. The communities reserve their best preachers and workers for this work.



A JESUIT, OR MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS, THE FAMOUS ORDER FOUNDED BY IGNATIUS LOYOLA IN 1534, PREACHING, SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, WORKS OF CHARITY, AND TEACHING CONSTITUTE THEIR EMPLOYMENTS. THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FOREMOST AS DEFENDERS OF THE CHURCH AND OF CATHOLIC TRUTH

The Congregation of St. Paul, New York City

a rule based upon the old monastic routine ; with the difference that while the monk divides his time between the service of God and that of his neighbor, the cadet divides it between himself and the government. The rising hour is about five o'clock ; from one to two hours are devoted to prayer and meditation ;



THE LATE FATHER HEWIT, SUPERIOR OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARY
PRIESTS OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE,
COMMONLY CALLED THE PAULIST
FATHERS, AN ORDER FOUNDED
IN NEW YORK, IN 1858, FOR
MISSION WORK.

after breakfast and a brief rest comes labor until noon ; the afternoon is filled in with recreation for an hour and some hours of labor, closing with devotions before supper ; and the evening is passed in the same fashion. Recreation is usually taken in common. This feature is strenuously insisted upon by all communities for the strengthening of the brotherly ties among the members.

The routine is rather pleasant, though perhaps at times soporific. This quality is easily removed by the daily trials, which, if not calamitous, are a severe test of human nature. The accommodations of a monastery or convent are primitive and rude, the fare is substantial and simple, but trying to the susceptible American stomach, and the close companionship of the members brings out personal

weaknesses promptly and irritatingly. The working of the rules of poverty and obedience is utterly unpoetic, and as hard on poor nature as may be. While the members get used to these things, they still suffer hardships quite unknown to us. However that is their business, and their success in it earns for them their crown.

Teaching Brotherhood founded by St. de La Salle.

Each community has its characteristics so marked that the well-informed Catholic easily distinguishes between Benedictine and Franciscan, Jesuit and Dominican, Redemptorist and Vincentian. For the community sense, if we may so call it, is very

strong ; in fact, it must be strong if the body is to hold together. The members are trained to feel keenly the importance of the common life to their own salvation and to the salvation of men, and the particular importance of their own society. Hence the society feeling is almost as intense in the members as race feeling among laymen.

The secondary aim of each community is some particular work, which is eagerly sought as soon as membership and preparation will permit. An examination of the statistics shows that all the communities in the United States are engaged in three departments—education, charity work for men and boys, and parish and mission work. In the field of education the work of the communities has been singularly effective. The colleges of the Jesuits enjoy a high reputation, the Benedictines have many fine institutions in the



A CHRISTIAN BROTHER OR MEMBER OF THE
BROTHERHOOD OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
—THIS ORDER CONSISTING OF LAY
BROTHERS, IS DEVOTED TO THE
EDUCATION OF THE POOR.

West, the Holy Cross Fathers have won a great success in their university at Notre Dame, Indiana, and the Brothers of the Christian Schools have been equally successful in the primary and grammar schools and in the college. The methods employed in these institutions are entirely their own, for the communities

Christ the Head Master of the School.

I would have you to know," says the Apostle, "that the head of every man is Christ." (I. Cor., xi:3.) The Christian Brother maintains, that Christ should be the head-master of every school of Christian children, and that all the under school teachers should be strictly Christian men and women. And what

a mistake to suppose that the exclusion of Jesus Christ from our schools does not hurt citizenship. The civilization that we enjoy is wholly the creation of Jesus Christ. The

spirit of American liberty and equality, as well as our sense of the dignity of human nature, are of Christ. The language taught in our schools was founded from a savage dialect by Christian bishops and priests and missionaries. The school children are nearly all named from the Saints of Christ's religion. The

sweet name of Jesus is invoked by the mothers of this people over their

childrens' cradles; however it may be dreaded in our schools, there is no other name under heaven so honored outside of school, especially in the sanctuary of home. To teach a child to know Jesus well and to love Him tenderly is to make him a new creature, no less for the state than for the Church and the home, is to give him the right conscience for citizenship. We teach our children to revere George Washington; but who would dare to say that Jesus Christ is not more to our nation than ten thousand Washingtons?



ST. DE LA SALLE DISTRIBUTING ALMS.

"Corporal Works of Mercy." Panel in the Marble Altar, New York Cathedral.

Educational System of De La Salle.

GOD made the human mind empty, that parent and priest, and school teacher might make it a divine Hall of Fame. God made the child's soul a *tabula rasa*, a bare surface, in order that his appointed teachers might cut into its immortal substance His maxims and precepts, His promises and penalties. What teacher at home, or in church, has better play for the use or abuse of this divine art than the school teacher? — especially when he stands for the State, and is hacked by its purse and its discipline. The Holy Ghost inspired St. John Baptist de La Salle to institute a brotherhood of Christians schoolmasters, because all men should know Christ and His salvation, and most men never know anything except what they learn at school, and few men unlearn the lessons from school. De La Salle felt that every school teacher should be of the mind of him who said that he considered "all knowledge as but as loss in comparison of the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Nowhere else can the lesson of the Cross be so well learned as at the school. De La Salle felt this with a Saint's intensity; he made it his mission, he bequeathed it to a great religious order of teachers in trust for all mankind.



ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE.

Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, pointing out the way of salvation to Children of all Nations.

Christian Schools and Education.

THE canonization of John Baptist de La Salle is the canonization of his work. The work and the man are one. We know a man, whether true or false, by his work. We believe or reject a teacher for his work's sake. A godlike man is God in act, and they that are of God in personal holiness, are godlike in their

deeds. Now, St. de La Salle's work is Christian schools and Christian school masters made universal and perpetual ; schools and masters organized for the whole world and for all ages, Holy Church might be expected to proclaim such a work divine and such a man a Man of God. The school forms the man. It is the concurrence of all influences for the making of a child into the man. The Christian Brothers' school is for the making of a child into the Christian man. The wrong school makes a right child a wrong man, the right school makes a wrong child a right man. Hence the inspiration of La Salle. The school forms the man, because it has the choice hours



ST. DE LA SALLE TEACHING CLASS.

Teaching Class, "Spiritual Works of Mercy."
Panel in Marble Altar, New York Cathedral.

of human life as its own : during the working hours of the day the child is given over to the school. School is the place of study and study forms the man. It forms, or malforms, his intellect to truth or falsehood, by principles or models of conduct.

A Noble Ecclesiastical Edifice.

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, New York, in which the Triduum in honor of the canonization of Saint de La Salle was held, Nov. 13, 14 and 15, 1900, is the most magnificent ecclesiastical structure on the Western Continent. The cornerstone was laid by Archbishop Hughes, August 15, 1858, with great pomp.

Work was immediately commenced, and continued until the civil war made it impossible to proceed. The noble edifice was dedicated on the 25th of May, 1879, by His Eminence Cardinal McCloskey, assisted by forty-two archbishops and bishops, with a pomp such as had never been witnessed in the United States. Beauty and majesty mark the interior. The



ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, NEW YORK, CITY.

Corner-stone laid, Aug. 15, 1858; dedicated, 1879; decorated geometrical style of architecture, similar to Cathedrals of Cologne, Rheims, and Amiens, 1275-1400. Built of hard, pure, white marble on a base of hard granite. Length, 333 feet; width, 175 feet; height of towers 330 feet.

altars are grand, and as a collection of painted glass, there is nothing, perhaps, in modern times, to compare with the windows. It is lighted by some nine thousand electric lamps, which render the vast edifice still more impressive.

Dominican Order, founded by St. Dominic, 1216.

In this country there are about forty different communities of men engaged in the double work of personal sanctification and of the instruction and sanctification of others.

From the social point of view, the reason of their existence may be considered economic; that is, the double work which they are called upon to perform is done more cheaply and powerfully by means of the community. The members of the community have the benefit of mutual encouragement and sympathy in the works of sanctification and charity. Their entire earnings are expended for the benefit of their order and for the salvation of men. They receive a good education, and are fitted with proper leisure for their vocation. Backed by the community, they can undertake any sort of work, and can serve at any point where the need is keenest.

All sorts and conditions of young Americans are won by the religious life, which is the common term for the monastic condition. For example, Father Deshon, present head of the Paulist community, was a classmate of Grant at West Point, later an officer in the army, and a non-Catholic to boot. One of his brethren, Father Robinson recently deceased, was a Confederate soldier in the Civil War, and entered the community while a prisoner on parole in New



A DOMINICAN, OR BLACK FRIAR—THE DOMINICANS (FOUNDED IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY) AND THE FRANCISCANS WERE AMONG THE LEADING ORDERS OF THE CHURCH UNTIL THE RISE OF THE JESUITS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Trappists, Branch of Cistercians, founded 1662.

York. Fathers Campbell and Pardow, two eminent members of the Jesuit community; Father McMillan, the Paulist; Father Wilson, the Dominican; Father Fidelis, the Passionist; Brother Justin, of the Christian Brothers, were all city boys who played ball with ardor, swam in the lordly Hudson, and went through the ordinary phases of American boy life.

Why these men became members of a community instead of entering a diocese would probably require a personal explanation from each. In general it may be answered that with such men the ideal life is always the sacerdotal; and in order to attain their ideal of the sacerdotal, the careful preparation and stable routine of the community life seemed the best means. These men are usually of the psychological stamp that sees and feels the end of all things almost as soon as it sees and feels the beginning. They feel the brevity of life and its importance as soon as they become conscious of it at all; and therefore they are imbued early with the necessity of making the most of every minute and of all their capacities and opportunities. Consequently, they strip like athletes for the fray, leaving aside all things that usually appeal to men, and embracing the conditions of the religious life as the best means to their end.

The daily routine of a community member **has not an** inviting appearance on paper, although the West Point cadet **lives up to**



ACISTERCIAN OR TRAPIST MONK IN THE WHITE CASSOCK OF HIS ORDER THE CISTERCIANS HAVE MONASTERIES AT GETHSEMANE, IN KENTUCKY, AND NEAR DUBUQUE, IOWA.

The Clerics of the Common Life.

From the Rev. John Talbot Smith.

Catholic Brotherhoods in the United States—an Authoritative Sketch of the Different Communities, their Reason for Existence, their Aims, their Manner of Life, and the Actual Work They Do.

OF twelve thousand priests in the United States, three thousand belong to the monastic bodies, besides some fifteen

hundred novices and three thousand lay brothers ; and of all these very few ever return to secular life, although it is fairly easy to do so. Of the total of seven thousand five hundred, the Jesuit order includes more than a quarter, though its rules are among the most severe.

Life in a clerical community is as rough and severe as that of a soldier in a camp. It is a life of poverty, for the monk and the community priest and layman get no salaries, only the most ordinary sort of a living,



A CARMELITE, OR MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL, COMMONLY CALLED THE WHITE FRIARS—THERE ARE CARMELITE CONVENTS IN THE DIOCESES OF NEWARK, BALTIMORE, PITTSBURG, ST. LOUIS, LEAVENWORTH, AND NEW ORLEANS.

The Capuchins, Instituted in 1528.

the plainest clothes, and the rudest fare. It is a life of military discipline, where obedience is the law, and disobedience meets with swift retribution. Its one material advantage is that the members live secure against sickness and old age, sure of proper support and care.



A CAPUCHIN FRIAR—THE CAPUCHINS ARE A BRANCH OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER, FOUNDED IN ITALY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, AND REPRESENTED BY SEVERAL MONASTERIES IN THE UNITED STATES.

The first aim of the monastic life is spirituality. This is the essential reason of its existence, and the chief attraction for its devotees. In the well-ruled convent, with its appointed hours of labor and of prayer, the inmates may ward off the intrusion of the world, and in silence practise those virtues of obedience, patience, poverty, chastity, and humility which should be the excellent property of every member of a community. The secondary aim is a particular work, such as study, teaching, preaching, and looking after the spiritual and physical needs of men.

The members of these communities vary in rank and condition according to the constitution of the society. In a community like the Paulists, the members are all priests; whereas with the Benedictines they are divided into two classes, priests and lay

brothers, who live under the same general law, but each according to the duties of his state. Again some communities, like the Alexians and the Brothers of the Christian Schools, are made up entirely of laymen.

A Sacred Work of Art.

THIS beautiful marble altar, in St. Patrick's Cathedral New York, is a gift from the Brothers of the Province of New York in honor of their founder. It is of Gothic design



MARBLE ALTAR OF ST. DE LA SALLE.

the only one of its kind in the world, and with the exception of the Church of St. John Baptist at Rheims, France, this is the first Altar erected in honor of the Saint in a public church.

Catholic Institutions of Learning.



THEY TRAIN YOUNG MEN IN ALL BRANCHES OF COLLEGIATE STUDIES.
Manhattan College.



THE BROTHERS ARE IN THEIR CHAPEL AT HALF-PAST FOUR IN THE MORNING.
Manhattan College.

THE SECOND EDUCATION.

THE duties of a father and mother with regard to their children increase in proportion as the child grows older. It is the part of the parents to instil into the heart of their child upright principles and Christian feelings, and thus to form or build up his future character. A good mother is, if not the first confessor, at least the first confidant of the budding conscience of her son and of her daughter; and when years shall render this ministry of affection insufficient, it is still the mother's part to initiate the child to a still more solemn confidence, and to prepare it with love and tenderness for the important duty of a first confession.

All truly Christian parents should most carefully guard their child's first steps in life; they should never leave him to venture alone, without help or guidance, in the midst of innumerable dangers which he must meet at every step; they should carefully choose his friends and companions, and separate him from any who would be likely to do him harm—from those who have been badly brought up, and whose words and ideas might instil the first principles of evil; also, as a general rule, from all who belong to parents of doubtful reputation. How many poor children are first initiated in vice and lose their childlike innocence for want of this much-needed watchfulness! Nine out of ten may have been ruined by the influence of bad companions.

At twelve or thirteen years of age, after the first communion, parents should redouble their care, in order to urge their child to persevere in that good path upon which he has now entered. For now come the most dangerous and perhaps the most difficult years of life. This age resembles that Cape of Storms which is notable for so many shipwrecks; only the best-manned and best-directed vessels escape the peril. This dangerous age of early youth, so charming when it is pure and innocent, so disastrous when it is not, should engross the entire care and thought of every good father and mother. If it is necessary that the child should leave his own home and go among strangers, before all things it is needful to provide for the sacred interests of the soul, and to place him amid good influences, and among such surroundings that the practice of religion, far from

being impossible to him, shall, on the contrary, be pleasant and easy, thus, it is necessary to avoid any calling which is incompatible with an observance of the Sunday; any position, school, or college, in which the young man may not easily, if he desire, fulfil his religious duties, confess, go to Holy Communion, assist at the different offices of the Church, and thus insure his Christian perseverance. Parents need never doubt but that they will be fully rewarded for all the care they may take for this purpose; their children, by remaining Christians, will continue to be their happiness and comfort; they will shun those vices by which young men often dishonor their families and change into bitter tears the hopes of their early years. How often the sorrow and trouble by which fathers and mothers are overwhelmed toward the close of their lives is trouble which they have entirely brought upon themselves; they reap what they have sown by their neglect, their want of faith, and by the few good examples with which they surrounded the early youth of their son, or of their daughter! But, on the other hand, how happy and peaceful are the closing years of life to the father and mother who have spent their days in one lifelong endeavor to make their children true and earnest Christians! They, too, shall reap what they have sown; fruits of peace and joy and love, of which death itself shall not be able to deprive them, and which shall follow them even unto the bosom of their God.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THE life that God has given us is the most precious and the most fundamental of His gifts. Every other benefit that Providence bestows, implies and supposes this first benefit of all. To live is, therefore, the primary of the rights of man. He who first dared to violate this sacred right, and to attempt the life of another man, was the execrable Cain, the eldest of the sons of Adam. He had one only brother, younger than himself, and also holier, more gentle, more amiable, and consequently more beloved.

Pride and envy entered into the heart of Cain; the devil, who by means of original sin had taken from man his spiritual life, desired to carry his ravages still further and to destroy the life of the body. He inspired Cain with a terrible determination to kill his brother Abel; and one day, when they had gone together to offer a sacrifice to God, Cain rose up against his brother and murdered him. Thus Cain (and Satan with him) became the first homicide.

The fury of evil passions has often renewed this horrible crime, of which Cain himself said, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." All men who commit this sin are called homicides.

Parricide is the term applied to the unnatural son who murders his father or mother; Infanticide, to the father or mother who murder their child; Regicide, to the man who dares attempt the life of his sovereign; and finally, a Suicide is the man who kills himself.

There has been, however, one homicide more guilty and more terrible than any we have named: it is that which was committed upon Good Friday on Mount Calvary, by the Deicidal Jews, upon the adorable Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Homicide is forbidden by the fifth commandment.

God, who is the author of all life, also constitutes Himself its guardian, and forbids every man to take away, unjustly, the life of his neighbor. We say unjustly, because there are circumstances in which we are permitted or even commanded to deprive a man of life; for instance, when confronted by an assassin who desires to murder us, or by an enemy in war.

It is also the right and the duty of sovereigns, by the command of God Himself, to put all great criminals to death, not only in order to purge society, but also to punish them, and to make them serve as an example to others.

But, beyond these exceptional cases it is, we repeat, strictly forbidden to attempt the life of any one under any pretext whatsoever.

We are even forbidden to run a great risk of killing any one; by scientific experiments, for instance; by laying senseless and dangerous wagers; by duelling, etc. To kill any one by accident and without intention, is not a crime but a misfortune.

Such homicides would, however, be guilty, if the persons who committed them might have avoided them by taking ordinary precautions. If we are forbidden to take away our neighbor's life, we are equally forbidden to take away our own. Our life does not belong to us any more than does that of our fellow-men. It belongs to God alone, and God alone can dispose of it. Suicide is a crime beyond forgiveness; it is the only one which cannot be pardoned, because it is the only one which takes away all possibility of repentance. It is pre-eminently, the sin against the Holy Ghost, who is the author of all life.

If any unfortunate man, overwhelmed by misery, should be tempted to despair, let him revolt against the terrible thought, that

the devil will perhaps inspire him to destroy himself; and let him remember that, in exchange for the transient and endurable afflictions of earth, he will condemn himself to the eternal fires of hell, and to the incomprehensible misery of damnation.

The fifth commandment forbids us to kill our fellow-men and to kill ourselves; but it goes still further. It also forbids us to do anything which could unjustly injure the life, health, well-being, or reputation of our neighbor. Thus, he who should take advantage of the poverty of one of his fellow-men, to impose on him some work beyond his strength, would sin against this commandment. In this case the law itself protects the interests of poor workmen and apprentices; it fixes the hours of work which may not be exceeded, and imposes severe penalties upon all classes of employers who should venture to do so.

But often these wise regulations are not put into execution, and the sin of those who have dared to violate them remains unpunished upon earth. Then God Himself will execute justice and will avenge the cause of the poor, the weak, and the friendless whom He loves.

Again, all parents or masters who refuse their children or dependents the necessities of life sin against the fifth commandment. There are in the world certain avaricious and hard-hearted people who only seek to grow rich, and care nothing for the health or well-being of those whom they employ; they will let them grow ill and die rather than consult a doctor or put themselves to any inconvenience. Is not such cruelty a veritable homicide?

And again, this sin is committed, although under another phase, by the slanderer who destroys the reputation of his neighbor, the fair fame without which life is often unendurable. A good reputation is a most valuable possession, and no man has the right unjustly to deprive another of it. Therefore, he who, without real necessity, destroys the reputation of his neighbor, is guilty of a moral assassination. "The tongue is an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison."

Slander is a great evil, but, what is more, it is an irreparable evil. The slanderer has not even the same resource as the calumniator, who can, by retracting his words and accusing himself, repair the ill that he has done; because, since slander consists in making known some wrong-doing that has truly been committed by another, it is not possible to retract, since a retraction would be a lie. Slander is, therefore, as irremediable as assassination. At the same time, it is not a grievous sin except when it bears upon matters of serious consequence.

Lastly, the fifth commandment forbids all hatred, anger, conflicts, blows, and wounds; it forbids the spirit of vengeance, and everything which might injure the body or life of our fellow-men. Much more might be said upon this subject, and many circumstances might be related in support of what we have said. But I hope that these few words will suffice to increase in your hearts a right regard for your neighbor, to throw a stronger light upon your principal duties with respect to his life, his well-being, and his reputation, and to induce you to practise more faithfully for the future all that is implied and divinely enforced by the fifth commandment of God.

SUICIDE.

Two soldiers, both sergeants in a French regiment, having leave one afternoon, went together to visit a compatriot who happened to be ill in the military hospital. In the bed next to that of their friend was another sick man; a man so terribly disfigured that it was painful to look at him; his nose and lips and chin were all seamed and shapeless with still recent scars. "Who could have been brutal enough to disfigure that poor fellow so horribly?" whispered one of the soldiers to his friend. "Scars like that will not help him in winning a wife!" "He did it himself," was the answer in the same low tone; "he attempted to kill himself, but he missed his aim and disfigured his face as you see! Now he thanks God for having left him on earth in spite of himself, and he swears to me that the devil will be troubled to get hold of him again. He was in great trouble—who is not in trouble at times? and he lost all control over himself, and fancied he could not endure to live longer; now he is thankful to live, even in all the suffering that those frightful wounds cause him!"

The conversation lasted some little time longer, and then the two sergeants left their friend; but they could not refrain from casting a compassionate glance in the direction of his suffering neighbor, and left the hospital much impressed by this sad spectacle. "What a fool a man must be to kill himself!" said one, when they were once more alone. "He wants to escape from some grief or trouble that he fancies he cannot endure, as if any trouble were eternal, as if fine weather did not always come after rain, and days of happiness after days of sadness. How often you see a man on the brink of despair one day, and quite comforted and hopeful on the next. A man kills himself, say, for love of some heartless woman, who only laughs at

his despair, and whose vanity will be increased by the thought that a man actually killed himself because of her. If he had only had the patience to live a week or two longer, both love and misery would have flown away together. Or a fellow kills himself on account of some debt he cannot pay, or some disgrace he thinks he cannot avoid, and perhaps even at that very moment some friends, some unlooked for providential help may be waiting at the door, ready to provide the money needed, or to avert the humiliation." "You are right," interrupted his friend, "and we have just had a very striking example of what you say. A sergeant-major in our regiment, who had indulged in extravagant amusements, took fifty francs from a desk. Upon the point of being discovered, he wrote to his parents, who failed to reply as quickly as he expected; he then applied by letter to an officer whom he knew intimately; one day passed, and he heard nothing from him. The man lost all control over himself, and became like one distraught; he saw himself condemned, dishonored, lost, and resolving to escape dishonor by suicide (just as if it were the punishment that made the dishonor and not the sin itself), he shut himself in his room and blew out his brains! An hour had scarcely passed, and his body was not yet cold, when the officer to whom he had written entered his room, bringing him the sum he had asked for; he had not been able to come before, and thus only because he did not know how to wait a few hours, the unfortunate sergeant had lost at one blow the life of his body . . . and something which is of higher value still."

These two sergeants were good and earnest Christians, and here we may say that the ranks of the army, with their ever-increasing number of good Catholic soldiers, fill one full of hope for the future—they were faithful in prayer, and scrupulously avoided all bad companionship, drinking, and sinful excesses. Courageously indifferent to the raillery of comrades of another order, they preserved in the regiment the Christian habits of their youth. We need not seek far for the secret of their perseverance, since they never passed a month without approaching the sacraments. "What folly," continued the soldier with animation, "and what selfishness, too, to sacrifice all duty, all affection, to a mere desire to escape from suffering! This miserable man thought only of himself, and yet, perhaps, he had a mother who depended entirely upon him, who will never cease to weep for him, and who will die bereft of the love and care he owed her. 'Let my mother weep,' he seems to say; 'let her grow old in grief and solitude; I cannot help it, my life is hateful to me,

and I will bear it no longer!’ Or perhaps he had a sister, a wife who loves him, friends to whom his death would bring sorrow and trouble. . . . ‘So much the worse for them if they suffer; but I—I will suffer no more!’ And our country—what would become of it if all her sons acted thus? ‘My country, let her do as she can; once dead, what is all the world to me?’ This is just what is said by the man who destroys his own life, not in word but in deed, and is it not a most ignoble egotism?

“And then it is such cowardice. A man kills himself because he has not the courage to live. For a brave man, and above all for a Christian, there is no suffering which cannot be borne. In nine cases out of ten, the troubles that come upon us are the natural consequences of our own faults, our own passions, our own sins. When a man has sufficient courage to commit a crime, he should surely not be wanting in courage to expiate it. It is vain to assert that there are circumstances in which he is, as it were, bound to pass sentence upon himself and to deprive himself of an existence of which he is utterly unworthy; every man is of use in this world who does his duty, and sets an example of resignation and courage and repentance; and to pass sentence upon himself is only to commit a further outrage upon true justice, upon the justice of men, and upon the justice of God! In whatever may be said to the contrary, the only real expiation consists in submission to a merited punishment, and in sincere repentance.

“Experience proves that, however shameful the crime, the grace of repentance can always efface it, and once more raise the guilty man, not only in the sight of God, but even in the eyes of men. Is not the penitent thief a saint in heaven now?

“If an assassin die upon the scaffold, and if in dying he accept his suffering, if he humiliate himself beneath the hand which strikes him, if he welcome death as a righteous expiation, then, at that very instant, hatred and contempt become changed into pity and sympathy—I might almost say into respect—and the assassin will die beneath the hand of the executioner absolved and pardoned even in the opinion of men. Who, when witnessing a bitter repentance, can dwell upon the sins of the past?”

“You speak like a book,” replied his friend, “and what is more, like a good book. For my part, a man who commits suicide always reminds me of a deserter. It is not sufficient to desert and to escape the weariness of service, you have afterward to escape the council of war. And if you sometimes succeed in eluding that, there is yet an-

other council of war which no man can avoid. What must that moment be in which he appears at the tribunal of the great God whom he has boldly defied in death as in life, and who requires a terrible account both of life and of death! That man must have a strangely constituted mind who can choose an eternity of misery in preference to those earthly trials which, however bitter, are never without some alleviation, if it consist only in the certainty that they will soon be ended." "Yes," said his comrade, laughing, "it is just like the man who walked into the river, that he might not be wet by the rain! How much better to suffer here than hereafter; we are happy in having faith."

Thus talking, the two soldiers reached their barracks, where we will take leave of them.

Take a lesson from the self-same school. I hope that you will have a life of unclouded happiness, but the future is known to God alone, and I can predict without the gift of prophecy, that He will send you trials here below. However grievous these may be, do not grow discouraged; never abandon yourself to despair; remind yourself constantly that the sufferings of this world are only for a time; that heaven, with all its joys, awaits him who shall have borne them with Christian fortitude; and if ever the frightful temptation to self-destruction should present itself to your heart, turn away from it with fear and shuddering. Suicide is the one crime which is beyond forgiveness, because it is the only crime which is beyond repentance!

SCANDAL.

To cheat and to steal are, certainly, not virtuous actions; if we do either, we sin against God, our neighbor, and ourselves; but to give scandal to others is still worse, for this is one of the greatest dangers which can menace the soul. Scandal is the evil which we do to others by the bad example that we give them.

A man does wrong, no one knows it; he is guilty in the sight of God; he will lose his own soul if he do not repent. This is very certain and very lamentable, but at least his example has perverted no one. But suddenly a man hides his wrong-doing no longer, his evil life becomes known and spoken of, he even speaks of it himself, boasts of it, and appears to glory in a miserable notoriety. Others, attracted at first by curiosity, begin to make a little circle round him, and to regard him with admiration. "At all events this man must get some pleasure and excitement out of life!" they begin to say;

and thus it follows that the evil which they regarded too closely strikes them, they are gradually overpowered by it; and next we may see them enjoying themselves after the manner of their model; they imitate him, and soon they desire to go still further than he! This is scandal!

One man offended God; at this hour there are ten, a hundred, a thousand. . . . Death strikes the author of this scandal; he goes to stand before his heavenly Judge and render an account of all those thousand souls lost by his example!

Thus you see how incalculable are the effects of bad example. How is it possible completely to retrieve a scandal? We may desire to do it, but often it is quite beyond our power. Our Lord said, "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh. It were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." He who knows everything, knew well that those who give scandal to their brethren stand upon the brink of their own eternal ruin! But, on the other hand, how happy a thing it is to give a good example! It is to work in union with God Himself for the salvation of souls. And how great is this power which each one of us possesses! Consider the case of a young man who has been so unhappy as to give scandal to others by setting them an evil example; if he only examine himself, if he reflect, and consider the terrible account he will have to render, he becomes changed and converted; he was openly wicked, and is now openly a Christian! His companions ridicule him; he pities them, he advises them to imitate him in his conversion; he sets an example of patience and temperance, of industry and morality, and, in the end, succeeds in saving a great number of those whom he would most certainly have led to destruction.

It is impossible to calculate the immense influence of example. By means of this all-powerful influence whole families, parishes, schools, and communities are either saved or lost. I have known a numerous family, worse than indifferent, become a model of religion and fervor, thanks to the holy influence of but one of its members, who, by turning to God with his whole heart, caused the light of faith to shine upon all who surrounded him through the force of example alone. And I have known another family in which the apostasy of the eldest son led away into heresy a number of his brothers and sisters. . . . How many parishes have been perverted, corrupted to their very centres by the scandal given by one bad priest! In a college, in a school, one thoroughly bad child will entice into evil the

greater part of his schoolfellows, and if the superiors do not arrest the contagion from its very commencement, by driving this black sheep out of their midst, the whole flock will surely be lost. And finally, in a State, how incalculable are the evils, which, by a fatal necessity, are always produced by the immorality of a sovereign or by his irreligion! Now, what is the conclusion to be drawn from all this? That scandal is an immense evil. He who has given scandal has but one chance of salvation, and that is by becoming entirely changed and setting a good example to those whom he formerly scandalized.

Human respect will often prove a stumbling-block; but we must gather courage; those who have dared to do evil must also dare to be repentant in the sight of all.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

By the sixth commandment God forbids us to defile by sin the body He has given us. Our body, the living temple of our soul, is consequently the temple of Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and this temple must be holy. Impurity is the terrible vice by which Satan, the enemy of Jesus Christ, and our own untiring foe, desires to soil this sanctuary of God.

Our body does not belong to us; God has not given, but has lent it to us, in order that we may do with it not what we will, but what He wills. He alone remains its Lord and Master; our soul possesses the body not as a right, but as a trust, of which it must render an account. We are not free to do with our body just what we desire, but are bound in strict justice, whether we will or not, to keep it in submission to the authority of its true master.

Purity or chastity is the virtue which accomplishes in the flesh the designs and will of God. By means of it the senses are subservient to the soul, which is itself subservient to Jesus Christ; and thus perfect order reigns.

Satan detests purity, and endeavors by constant attacks, which we call temptations, to disturb and trouble this tranquillity; and, by causing the flesh to rebel against the spirit, he tries to shake the soul itself, and to separate it from Jesus Christ by sin. When the tempter approaches us in this manner, let us have recourse to God by prayer, and never voluntarily consent to temptation.

There can be no sin without the will to sin, and we should despise such ignoble temptations. Besides prayer, the surest means to pre-

serve purity, and to conquer all attacks against it, consists in constant employment, in frequent communion, and in devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

We do not desire, nor are we able to enter here into details. Let it suffice to say that the sixth commandment forbids all words, looks, and actions, in a word everything, that is contrary to purity. It commands us to be modest and chaste, to avoid everything which can excite the senses or open the door to the devil. We must, therefore, if we desire to remain faithful to God, most carefully shun all occasions of sin, such as evil company, pernicious books, and dangerous pleasures; and as these vary infinitely, according to the age, position, and character of each individual, there is no other rule to give than that all should follow the practice of good Christians, and be guided by the advice of their confessor.

Impurity is a scourge for the health of the body as well as for the sanctity of the soul. It causes death, and thus religion, by helping us to avoid its fatal blows, is our temporal benefactress, as well as the mother of our souls and the guardian of our salvation. How many have seen their youth, their beauty, their health, their life, wither in ignominy by reason of impurity alone; and in how many souls it has tarnished the source of true joy and pure affections, of peace and of real happiness! It is utterly detestable; it is the enemy of men as well as the enemy of God; the enemy of the body as well as the enemy of the soul; it should be hated on earth as it is hated in heaven. And yet, behold the corruption of the world! This terrible vice is everywhere regarded with the greatest leniency; it covers itself with flowers; it hides its infection under the mask of pleasure and happiness; it usurps the holy and divine name of love, and thus drags down to the lowest depths the noblest and most sublime sentiments of the soul.

God has Himself reserved for all such sinners the fearful punishment of the eternal fires of hell, that fire of which He Himself has said that it shall never be extinguished. "*Ignis eorum non extinguetur.*" When we are tempted to sin against holy purity let us think of hell. We should say to the body, "Thou dost pretend that it is impossible to conquer thy passions, that this temptation is irresistible! How wilt thou then be able to endure consuming fires, and to dwell eternally in flames with Satan?"

We may find in Holy Scripture a terrible example of the hatred felt by God to this sin of impurity, viz., in the punishment of the town of Sodom. Given up, beyond all other cities, to a frightful ex-

cess of depravity, this infamous town was consumed with all its inhabitants by a miraculous and sulphurous fire which enveloped it by the command of God. Reduced to ashes, and still visible in the depths of the Dead Sea, it remains forever as a witness of divine vengeance, as a warning to sinners, as an earthly manifestation of the punishment of impurity by eternal fire, and lastly as the most impressive confirmation of the sixth commandment of God: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

DRUNKENNESS.

THERE is a certain fearful malady which ravages and devastates the whole world. There is no country free from its inroads; it is to be met with in France as in England, in Europe as in America, among people who call themselves civilized just as among barbarians. For many centuries it has decimated humanity, and has been the ruin of the working classes.

You will think, perhaps, that I am speaking of the plague, or of cholera, or of some pestilence of this description! But no, the sickness to which I refer is much more to be dreaded! . . . It is a far more mortal sickness; and it is doubly terrible, because it does not only kill the body but even destroys the soul, and its lamentable influence extends beyond the grave!

It is called drunkenness. This it is which degrades and brutalizes the miserable man who once yields to its fatal tyranny! It is this which is the ruin of families, and which is thus most frequently the cause of that frightful poverty which is to be witnessed in large towns.

Drunkenness is the habit of drinking immoderately. Intoxication when quite involuntary is not a sin. It is a sin more or less grievous, as it is more or less wilful; and also according to the extent of the excess. It is always a grievous fault voluntarily to lose the use of reason.

"Be not deceived," say the Holy Scriptures, "drunkards shall not enter into the kingdom of God."

I. Drunkenness debases and degrades a man. What distinguishes men from brutes? Is not reason his noblest prerogative? Now, what does the drunkard do? How does he use his intelligence? Does he not reduce himself to a state of stupidity in which he knows no longer what he says nor what he does? His feet tremble beneath him. his eyes grow dim, his tongue stammers foolishly; instead of

walking he stumbles on his way, and defiles himself with the mire and clay in which his feet are slipping! Is not the dog which passes by him a nobler animal than he? Poor fallen humanity!

The magistrates of Sparta used to expose in public a drunken slave in order to inspire their youth with a horror for this vice. "What monster is this?" cried the crowd; "he has the face of a man, but he has the nature of a beast!"

II. Drunkenness enfeebles the health and shortens the life. Intoxication exhausts and weakens the frame, however great the physical strength may naturally be. Experience proves it. The ordinary effect of wine, of brandy, and of all intoxicating drinks, is to carry the blood violently to the head; and thus, punished by the very instrument of his sin, apoplexy and sudden death are the usual chastisements which await the drunkard. An unfortunate soldier, having one day drunk to an excess, fell into such a state of intoxication that it brought on fever, and then inflammation of the brain, which left him forever bereft of reason. Great God! what a state was this in which to appear before Thy divine tribunal!

III. Drunkenness inflames the passions, and brings misery into every home. Woe to the woman who has a drunkard for her husband! and still more, woe to the husband and the children of the woman who drinks! Without speaking of the want of morality which almost always accompanies this terrible habit, is there anything more debased than a man overcome with wine? When he returns home, after having squandered all the earnings of the week so sadly needed by his family, he finds himself face to face with a hopeless or exasperated woman. If she meet him with just reproaches, then, heated by drink, and half-distraught, he becomes furious, gives vent to imprecations, sets a terrible example to his unfortunate children, and ill-treats both them and their unhappy mother! What an infamous spectacle! Tears on one side; oaths and violence on the other; are not such homes as these reflections and images of hell?

St. Augustine relates that a young man in the town, named Cyril, who, in the society of worthless companions, passed his days in a state of intoxication, having one day yielded to an excess of intemperance, returned home, and stabbed one of his sisters who reproached him with his condition. At the crisis of the victim the father hastened to the spot, and Cyril then dared to lift his hand against him who gave him life, and killed him as he had killed his sister. St. Augustine, being immediately informed of this execrable

crime, assembled his people in the church, and although he had already preached twice that day, ascended the pulpit and made known to his hearers the terrible sin into which drunkenness had led one of their fellow-citizens. His sobs and his emotion spoke more loudly than his words. The greatest distress was visible throughout the whole assembly, and all joined in fervent prayer to avert those strokes of divine justice which might be expected to fall upon the city in which so monstrous a crime had been perpetrated. Poor wives, who have the misfortune of being united to husbands who are drunkards, never reproach them when you see them in this state. How can you benefit a man who is capable of neither feeling nor reflection? Turn to God, who, in all our troubles, is ever ready to comfort and console us. Pray constantly and untiringly for the conversion of your husband. In prayer alone you win a means to lighten your burden, and to avoid offending God.

Children, who have witnessed the sinful excesses of your father, guard yourselves from following his example, and, taught by a frightful experience, promise God to walk in a totally opposite way.

But for yourselves, drunkards, my poor friends, should the providence of God ever permit these simple pages to come within your sight, I say to you, Take courage; and should it even be necessary for you to renounce entirely that which is the means of leading you to perdition, do not hesitate, be converted, live a changed life, become honest men and earnest Christians. Awake to the moans and lamentations of the wife you render miserable. Awake to the tears and cries of the little children you are dragging down to utter beggary. Awake to the thunderings of the anger of God. Behold! hell is open before you; and you will most surely fall into it if you still persist in sin.

Then, have confidence in God, who is ever ready to pardon all things to him who repents. Lose no time, but have recourse at once to Divine mercy, and profit by the time that is left to you, and which is perhaps shorter than you think, to obtain, by true repentance, the pardon of past sins.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

WITH the exception of the professional sharper, every one agrees in acknowledging the culpability and infamy of theft. Upon this point people quite without religion think just the same as Christians.

The seventh commandment of God condemns theft, and it is this

commandment which I desire to explain with several details. These details, rest assured, are not superfluous; a number of people will grant a general principle without understanding all the consequences which result from it, and even those who grant most willingly that it is forbidden to steal are sometimes surprisingly clever in blinding themselves as to the nature of certain forbidden profits which, in clear language, ought to be called thefts.

To steal is to take something which does not belong to us without having any right to it; it is to sin against our neighbor by appropriating what is lawfully his. It is not here necessary to demonstrate that it is wrong to steal. "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you," says the law of God. Should you be willing for any one to take your clothes, your money, your house, your field, or anything that belongs to you? Should you not justly condemn the man who committed such an action toward you? Therefore, theft is both guilty and unjust. There are many methods of stealing. The best known, and the most daring, is theft upon the high-road; the theft committed by the armed bandit who stops the unwary traveller and demands his money or his life. Next in the category comes a class of thieves who are quite as dishonest, but whose evil doings are involved in much more mystery. These are swindlers, sharpers, pick-pockets, housebreakers, in a word, the ordinary *habitués* of the house of correction. For such as these there is no cry for mercy, since they are universally rejected and condemned. And next comes a third class not so easily recognized. These are people who, under a pretence of rendering you a service, get possession of your money by schemes and calculations so cleverly concocted that they appear quite above reproach. They are charitable enough to lend you a sum of money at the modest interest of twenty, twenty-five, or fifty per cent; or they will lend you money with a show of fair dealing at only eight or ten per cent, but in a very short time, by accumulating both interest and principal, they will soon contrive to ruin you.

Usurers are the curse of workmen, small farmers, clerks, and young married men. The law discourages the practice of usury as much as possible, but it can render itself invisible, and often hides itself so well that it is impossible to prove it in order to punish it. But although the usurer may succeed in eluding human justice, he shall fall hereafter into the hands of God, who cannot be deceived.

The fourth method of stealing, with regard to which it is very easy to deceive one's self, is, for this reason, only too common, especially in large towns. A shopman sells for the first quality some-

thing that he knows to be of inferior quality; he weighs, he measures, always to his own advantage; he knows how to turn the scale so cleverly that the unfortunate purchaser can perceive nothing wrong. Thus out of twelve or fifteen yards he will manage to gain about half a yard; out of fifteen or twenty pounds of merchandise, a pound or a pound and a half. This is a theft, nothing but a theft!

A cook goes to market; she bargains and buys for about three shillings the chicken or the fish for which anywhere else she must have paid at least five shillings; then she unhesitatingly enters five shillings in her book of expenditure, excusing herself by this kind of reasoning, which is unfortunately prevalent among servants: "I might have gone to the fruiterer's, and then I should have spent five shillings; if I have taken the trouble to go to market to wear out my boots, and to beat down the prices, it is quite fair that I should profit by it, and not my master and mistress." That is a theft, nothing but a theft; the interests of your master and mistress ought to be to you the same as your own, and as for the two shillings you have stolen them!

A servant asks and obtains from some purveyor five per cent upon each account; nothing could appear more legitimate. "By going to this man rather than another," the servant argues, "I enable him to gain a large sum of money every year; he recognizes, by a trifling commission, the little service that I render him; I may therefore quite conscientiously profit by this arrangement." Yes, but on the condition, rarely observed, that this commission should be upon the profit of the shopman, and not at the expense of the master, unless with his consent. And in some cases the profit is so small that it is impossible to allow the five per cent. Then what is the result? The shopman gives false weights, increases his prices, and the servant, blinded by interest, pretends not to perceive it. Nevertheless he wrongs the master who pays and employs him by allowing him to be charged unfairly. Is he, then, an honest servant?

We might add many other examples; among others we might speak of children who abstract small sums from their mother's drawer under the specious pretext that what belongs to the parents belongs to the children, of many who exact money unfairly for small services in which they have been employed; but it is impossible to say everything, and the individual conscience will supply what is wanting.

Theft is a mortal sin when it is of some importance, and this importance must be determined by the circumstances, and by the value and importance of the object stolen. Thus, to steal a few pence, or

an old coat, from a poor man might be a mortal sin. At the same time, it is quite certain that, however great the fortune of the person robbed, to steal a sum of four or five shillings would be committing a mortal sin.

If we are forbidden to steal from others, we are equally forbidden to retain stolen property.

If you perceive that you have in your possession something which belongs to me, it is quite clear that you ought to restore it to me, and that as soon as possible. This is simple justice.

To make restitution is to restore to others that which rightfully belongs to them.

We are obliged to make restitution under pain of mortal sin, in the case of an object of some value. No one is obliged, in making restitution, to inform against themselves; it is even better to avoid it. The money may be sent anonymously, or placed in the hands of the priest or some person of confidence, so that it may reach its destination safely and secretly. If it is impossible to restore to its owners what has been wrongfully taken from them, it should be given to the poor, or employed in some work of piety. But in everything of this kind there is always one practical rule to give: consult your confessor, and do exactly what he tells you.

I need not add that a man who does not pay his debts when he is able to pay them wrongs his neighbor and breaks the seventh commandment.

In this, as in everything which concerns honor, it is well to be excessively careful. This is the only case in which it may be good to be scrupulous. How much less misery, how much less crime, there would be in the world, if all men heard and faithfully kept the seventh commandment.

THEFT.

THEFT! what a sinister word! It causes the cheek to flush with shame, and the heart to swell with a sense of indescribable scorn and indignation!

To steal is to take voluntarily something that belongs to another.

To take the property of another by mistake, thinking it is our own, is not to steal but only to deceive one's self. The most honest people might make such a mistake as this. But in such a case as this there is this difference between an honest man and a thief; a thief would keep his usurped property, while an honest man would restore it directly he discovered his error.

It is related of St. Eloi, minister of Dagobert, King of France, that, desiring to build a monastery, he asked of the king his master some land for this purpose. When the building was completed Eloi perceived that the architects had taken a foot of land more than Dagobert had granted. He hastened immediately to the palace, threw himself like a guilty man at the king's feet, and asked pardon for his infidelity. Surprised and touched by such noble rectitude, and such extreme tenderness of conscience, the king raised him with kindness and punished him by doubling his first donation. After Eloi had retired: "See," said the king to those who surrounded him, "how faithful and how conscientious are those who serve Jesus Christ; my governors and stewards will unscrupulously possess themselves of entire provinces, while Eloi trembles at having one inch of land which belongs to me!"

The most daring theft (of which we have, thank God, no occasion to speak here) is that violent and forcible robbery which is practised only by brigands and highwaymen. These wretched men who scale walls, break open doors and windows, and waylay travellers, only fall into such an excess of crime by forgetfulness of God, and the loss of all religion.

But that which is, alas, far more common, is the secret, hidden theft, dexterously committed, and the very guilt of which is often concealed by some specious pretext. And thus, whatever may be said to the contrary, the child steals who takes things secretly from his parents. The servant steals who, under pretence of insufficient wages, contrives to keep even the smallest amount of change out of the money given him for different purposes, or who gives away bread or wine without the permission of his master.

The workman steals who, under pretext that he is not sufficiently paid, manages to pay himself with his own hands, and to deceive his employer in a multiplicity of ways.

The shopman steals who sells at a high price goods which he knows to be of an inferior quality; or who deteriorates what he sells, wine, for instance, or milk, by mixing it with water to increase the quantity; or has recourse to certain tricks which add to the weight of different articles of commerce.

All these different methods of cheating and deceiving are very common in the world, but to be guilty of either is to sin, and sometimes to sin very grievously, according to the extent of the wrong that is done, and every one is under obligation to make reparation to their neighbor as far as that is possible. There are many other

ways of obtaining unjust possession of the property of others. The cupidity of man is so inventive! To cite a few of these different ways: It is dishonest to bring about an unjust trial; to profit by a judicial sentence that you know to be false; to lend money upon usury; to neglect any duty through cowardice or negligence, as workmen or servants do who only work when their master is watching them; to leave debts unpaid when it is possible to pay them; to withhold from servants or workmen the wages due to them; to cheat at play; to keep anything you might find, without trying to discover its owner; to break a promise; all these common failings are nothing but disguised dishonesty, and those who are addicted to such practices as these will certainly go to hell or to purgatory if they do not repair, as far as in them lies, the wrong they have done to their neighbor.

Those who have stolen must not fail to restore; this is unquestionable. "Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," says the Gospel. Thieves shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. "No restitution," cried the great bishop St. Augustine, "no restitution, no absolution." And in this the law of God is sanctioned by all human laws; in every civilized country thieves are punished and are forced to restore what they have taken, or to repair the mischief they have done.

When it is impossible to make restitution it is at least necessary to repent, and to be sincerely disposed to make restitution whenever that is possible.

It is, moreover, necessary to restore the stolen property to the person from whom it was stolen, and not to any other. There are those who believe it is sufficient to give something of equal value to the poor, but in this they entirely deceive themselves. It is to Cæsar that it is necessary to restore that which was taken from Cæsar. And mark well that this is without any distinction of riches or property, of honor or dishonor. We have no more right to take a penny from a rich man than from a poor man, for is not the penny of the rich man quite as clearly the property of another as is the penny of the poor man? If to steal from a poor man is a more serious offence than to steal from a rich man, that is only because of the extent of the wrong done, and not because it is allowable to take from the rich, even of their superfluity. Alas! how great has been the evil caused by cupidity. How many souls have been cast into hell by possessions unlawfully obtained! How many have wanted courage to repair the wrong done to their neighbor! How many have wanted

courage to acknowledge this sin of dishonesty at the tribunal of penance! And yet it is the tribunal of pardon and of mercy.

Stolen money hardens the heart. Thieves seldom repent. A miserable usurer died without the sacraments some years ago, in Normandy, for the sake of a sum of eight francs which he was not willing to restore! . . . To be eternally lost for the sake of eight francs! Is it possible to understand such madness?

Oh, let us be honest men! It is not everything to be an honest man, but it is much. Let us guard against the desire for money; let us covet something nobler and more worthy of ourselves. "Blessed," said our divine Master, "are the poor in spirit" (namely, those whose hearts are detached from the fleeting prosperity of the world), "for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THE eighth commandment of God forbids many sins which are hurtful to our neighbor as to ourselves—lying, false witness, and calumny. We might fill a whole volume with so important and practical a subject; but a few words are better than none, and those few we will try to make both clear and simple.

To lie is to speak with an intention to deceive; it is to affirm as true what we know to be false, or as false what we know to be true, with the intention of misleading those to whom we speak. It is evident that lying is a great evil, since God is truth itself.

There are many kinds of lies; the least serious of all is that which is spoken in jest, for amusement, and to entrap some one; in such a case as this, it might be no sin if nothing serious is involved. Officious lies, being more deliberately spoken, are of greater importance; these are lies that are told to render service to others, to prevent any one from being punished, or to obtain some advantage for a friend; however charitable the intention, such lies are distinctly forbidden. No lie is allowable, under any pretext, not even to render service to others.

If you lie to excuse yourself, the cowardice or self-love which prompts you to speak falsely adds also to the gravity of your offence. It is still worse if you lie from a spirit of boasting, or worse still to injure another. Under different circumstances a lie may become a grievous sin if it relate to anything of great importance, and is accompanied by circumstances which take away all excuse. A lie may be even a sacrilege; for instance, a serious lie told in confession.

But whatever may be the gravity of a lie under particular circumstances, it must always be avoided with the greatest care; he who is not faithful in small things will hardly be faithful in greater things.

False witness is a solemn lie which always includes perjury, and which is usually not only a sin but a crime. God by the mouth of St. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, points out to us the enormity of this sin in the tragical account of the death of Ananias and Saphira. Ananias and Saphira his wife were Jews, and had become Christians. It was in the time of the Apostles at Jerusalem; and the early Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, and utterly detached from the things of this world, parted voluntarily with all their possessions and brought the price of them to the Apostles, to be distributed among the poor.

Ananias and Saphira, being less fervent, yet not wishing to appear less perfect than the rest, brought only a part of their fortune, affirming to the Apostle St. Peter, who solemnly questioned them, that that was all they had. "Why hast thou lied to the Holy Ghost?" said St. Peter, supernaturally enlightened by the Spirit of God. "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart? Couldst thou not keep thy possession, was it not in thy power? No one obliged you to bring it to us. Thou hast not lied to men, but to God."

And Ananias and Saphira fell, suddenly struck down, and died. If perjurers and false witnesses are not always punished thus immediately, their sin is no less serious, and they will surely feel the effects of God's justice hereafter if they do not quickly repent.

There is yet another way of violating the eighth commandment, and that is by calumny.

Calumny consists in wronging our neighbor by imputing to him some evil that he has not committed. If it is anything of serious consequence, calumny is a mortal sin. But it need hardly be said that for calumny to be a sin there must be an evil intention, and a clear knowledge of the falsehood asserted; otherwise it would be simply error or slander. A calumniator is necessarily a liar who lies with the intention of destroying the character of his neighbor. When we have had the misfortune to commit this sin, and thus to take away any one's reputation, we are bound by conscience to repair, as much as possible, the evil we have done. In this respect, just as with theft, reparation is a rigorous duty, and one of the essential conditions of true repentance and of that pardon which we ask from God. It is necessary to be most scrupulous in speaking of others; there are few conversations in which calumny does not play

a principal part, and, whatever palliations may be urged, such conversations are no less sinful and dangerous. He who would be horrified at the thought of stabbing his neighbor with a knife, stabs him pitilessly and remorselessly with his tongue. Let us therefore consider our words. Let us be neither inconsiderate, nor chattering, nor mischief-making. Let us be, on the contrary, guarded in speech, and merciful in judgment. Let us love the truth, and thus show our love to Our Lord, who has said of Himself, "I am the Truth." Let us be straightforward and sincere; when we have been mistaken let us always have the courage to recognize our fault, and, if questioned, to acknowledge our liability to error. He who thus humbles himself shall be exalted both before men and before God. Let us never tell a lie for any consideration whatever, but ever cultivate an especial reverence toward the eighth commandment of God: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

IF the sixth commandment forbids every act that is contrary to purity, the ninth goes still further, and forbids every thought and desire contrary to this virtue. An evil thought, a sinful desire, are grievous sins when they are entirely voluntary. When they are not voluntary, they are not sins, but temptations. The devil, who from the time of the fall has exercised over us his disastrous influence, endeavors by every means to shake our will, and to turn it away from the obedience it owes to God.

In order to tempt us he first makes use of our imagination, and, at the moment when we are least prepared, torments us by evil thoughts which he knows how to render seductive. He has also power to present to the mind a terrible imagery by which he hopes to entice the soul into his snares. Fable relates how ancient navigators sometimes encountered in the midst of the seas strange beings called sirens, half-women and half-serpents, whose beautiful faces and exquisite voices so charmed those who were imprudent enough to wait and listen to them, that the unfortunate men, fascinated and bewildered, allowed themselves to fall into the water, where the sirens devoured them.

Satan makes fact of this old fable every day by tempting and destroying many victims. He casts a perfidious and alluring disguise over the evil he desires us to commit. Do not listen to him; he is a traitor. He lies and he deceives us. Happiness is not, cannot be,

obtained by the means that he points out. It is death and not life that he offers us.

The greatest saints, as well as we, have had their fierce temptations. They have repulsed them with invincible energy, and their holiness has been augmented in the combat. St. Francis of Sales, the great and admirable bishop of Geneva, who died without ever having committed a mortal sin, acknowledged to one of his intimate friends that chastity and meekness had been the Christian virtues which had demanded from him the greatest vigilance. St. Catherine of Siena, who was an angel of holiness and innocence, who passed a part of her life in ecstasy, was once so rudely attacked by the devil that for two months she had no respite; after this frightful temptation, which she had courageously resisted, Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared visibly before her, and as St. Catherine, prostrating herself at His feet, thanked Him humbly for her deliverance, and said to Him, "O my Saviour, where wast Thou during all this temptation?" Jesus answered her with tenderness, "My daughter, I was in thy heart, and thou hast never been nearer to Me."

If the saints have been tempted thus, it is not strange that we should be tempted too. Let us imitate their firmness, and when Satan knocks at the door of our heart, we must be careful never to open it to him; we should not even be too much disturbed by the noise he makes at the door. We must say to him clearly and without hesitation, *Vade retro Satana*: "I know thee, and thou shalt not deceive me. I belong to God in this world, and forever." One of the best means of weakening temptations is to utterly despise them. It is better to pay no attention to them, but, as soon as you are conscious of them, to try to distract the mind by some occupation, and by turning the thoughts to some entirely different subject. If the attack continue, let us then pray, employ the best means in our power and have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, the Queen of angels and the special protectress of purity. Let us make with reverence the sign of the Cross, so dreaded by the devil, and most carefully avoid everything that could awake or develop the temptation. But I repeat that there is no sin in thoughts which are not voluntary; that is to say, provoked or freely accepted by the will; let us then keep our hearts and minds innocent and pure even when assailed by fierce temptation. In whatever state we may be, let us guard the treasure of Christian chastity. Let young men follow the holy example of St. Louis of Gonzague, of St. Stanislaus of Kostka, and of so many other pure and virtuous young men. Let young girls walk

in the steps of that innumerable crowd of Christian virgins who, under the protection of the Virgin of virgins, Mary, the immaculate Mother of God, form, both on earth and in heaven, the long retinue of the Lamb without spot.

Let husbands and wives always remember the sanctity of marriage, mutually respect each other, and, in imitation of Sara and young Tobias, sanctify their love by the holy love of God; and let them by constant prayer call down the blessing of God upon their union.

How great and important a reformation would be effected in society; how far greater would be the peace and happiness of many homes, if this commandment were but faithfully observed!

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THERE are many kinds of evil desires. After having declared by the ninth commandment that all unlawful desires of the flesh are guilty and forbidden, God gives us a tenth and last commandment to proscribe all unlawful desires for the property of others.

I say "unlawful desires," since it is not the desire for our neighbor's possessions that is forbidden, but simply the unjust desire; it is no sin to wish for something that belongs to another, but only to do so in an unlawful manner. For instance, it is not in the least forbidden that I, a poor workman, or the poor mother of a family, should desire comforts like those which my neighbor enjoys, who is even able to bring up her little family with ease. But I am forbidden to desire the possession of this fortune by unjust or injurious means. When I see my comrade wearing a good coat, very thick and quite new, while I, poor fellow, have nothing on my back but a threadbare waistcoat, or a ragged shirt, I may, in all conscience, give a heavy sigh, and say to myself, "When shall I be dressed as warmly and as comfortably as that?" When I see a grand carriage pass, is it not quite lawful and natural that I should cast a piteous glance upon the old umbrella and the worn-out shoes which are my sole protection from the rain and the mud?

Such desires as these are not in themselves unjust or guilty; but they are always useless and may easily become dangerous. Am I any the richer for having wished I were not poor? Have I a good coat upon my back because I have sighed to possess one? All these desires will bring fortune to no one, and the truly wise man should abstain from them, because, far from rendering him happier, they do but embitter those privations from which he already suffers.

Still more, these desires may become dangerous, and even guilty. If we think much of our neighbor's goods, desiring to possess them honestly, we may unconsciously go farther and desire to possess by some unlawful means, even by cheating or by violence. These evil sentiments of envy and jealousy are nothing less than a direct violation of the tenth commandment; and it is to these that I desire to call your attention.

There is in our nature an instinctive leaning toward pleasure and enjoyment, and when we suffer privation, we are only too ready to feel irritated and indignant at the prosperity of others. Hence arise hatred and antipathy, and often even criminal actions; many thefts and assassinations have originated solely in this subtle sentiment of envy, in this despicable jealousy which leads us to cast covetous glances on our neighbor's goods, upon his coat and his field, his horses and his house.

And hence arises Socialism, which is essentially a doctrine of envy and rage, a programme of the unjust anger of him who has nothing against him who has much, or, rather, of him who has less against him who has more.

It is difficult to say how fatal this passion proves to those who are once overcome by it. To begin with, it renders them miserable because it causes them to suffer, not from their own troubles alone, but from the good fortune of their neighbors, their friends, and their relations. And next, it constantly paralyzes and unfits them for work, by bringing ever before them the thought of riches which they will never obtain and by making them averse to everything which is opposed to that smooth and prosperous life which is the object of their envy.

How much happier men would be, how great the social improvement, even from a worldly point of view, if all would listen to the peaceful, beneficent voice of religion! Faith permits them, we have said, to desire a happier existence; she even makes a duty of work and of honest endeavor, without which it were impossible for the workman to rise from the depths of poverty to a life of comparative comfort and ease; but, more than all, she consoles them in the midst of their troubles, and, penetrating to the depths of the heart, plants there the seeds of hope and joy. Religion repeats to them those sweet words which fell long ago from the sacred lips of her divine Founder: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest to

your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light." She points them to heaven, to an eternal joy, an unmingled happiness, a perfect repose.

Behold what awaits you if you are faithful during your probation, and if, following the example of your Master, you bear your cross with patience day by day!

Set your supreme affections on the things above, and not on the things of earth; and if sometimes the prosperity of others excite you to desire what, in your case, God has been pleased to withhold, let these desires never be unjust; let them never infringe upon the tenth and last of the divine commandments.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

THERE are six commandments of the Church, namely: I. To rest from servile work, and to hear Mass on all Sundays and Holy-days of Obligation.

II. To fast and abstain on the days commanded. These embrace Lent, the Ember Days, Fridays in Advent, the eves of certain festivals; and abstention from flesh-meat on Fridays and other appointed days of abstinence.

III. To confess our sins at least once a year.

IV. To receive worthily the Blessed Eucharist at Easter or within the time appointed.

V. To contribute to the support of our pastors.

VI. Not to marry within forbidden degrees of kindred, nor to solemnize marriage within forbidden times.

These commandments are obligatory on all Catholics, as the Church has power from her Founder, Jesus Christ, to give commandments, He having empowered her to guide and govern the faithful in His name. Having their origin in Christ, therefore, they bind all Catholics to submission and fidelity

FIRST COMMANDMENT OF THE CHURCH.

To rest from servile work, and to hear Mass on all Sundays and Holy-days of Obligation.

Besides the fifty-two Sundays of the year, the Church commands us, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to sanctify certain days which we call Feasts, and which are intended to recall to the memory of Christians the principal mysteries in the life of the Saviour and of

His Blessed Mother, the triumphs of the martyrs, and the heroic virtues of the Saints. These Feasts are of two kinds: the first, called Feasts of Obligation, impose upon the faithful the obligation of resting from manual labor and assisting at Mass; the others, called Feasts of Devotion, do not necessitate rest from work nor attendance at Mass under pain of sin, but it is right to celebrate them by public prayer, in order to derive from them the spiritual advantages which the Church proposed in their institution. There are in the United States six Holy-days of Obligation, viz., the Circumcision of Our Lord, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, All-Saints, Christmas Day, and Ascension Day. There are other great Feasts which are religiously observed, such as Easter, Pentecost, etc., but as these always fall on Sunday it is not necessary to command that they should be kept holy. As the establishment of these Feasts is entirely a matter of ecclesiastical discipline, their number may be increased or diminished, according to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiffs. The first commandment of the Church obliges us, therefore, to sanctify these eight feasts by resting from servile work: to disobey the Church of God in an affair of such importance would be a mortal sin, and the Christian who ventures to infringe this command could only be excused by a truly sufficient reason.

By the second general commandment the Church points out to us the principal duty which must serve as the foundation of this salutary sanctification. This duty is the assistance at the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass, in which Our Lord Jesus Christ deigns to descend into our midst beneath the veils of the Holy Sacrament, and thus to render present to His Church even unto the end of the world the one great Sacrifice of our Redemption. The Mass being the central act of the worship of God upon earth, it is quite natural that the Church should have chosen it as the principal means by which Sundays and Feasts must alike be sanctified.

In order to fulfil this precept, it is also necessary to hear Mass with reverence and attention, from the beginning to the end. Those who through negligence enter the Church after the Gospel do not obey the commandment.

The assistance at Mass every Sunday is the reunion of the great Christian family; by it they are enabled to render to God the public worship of adoration, thanksgiving, and prayer, which is due to Him; to remember without ceasing that they are all the children of one father, the members of one body, the faithful of one Church, the

soldiers of one army, and the lambs of one fold. It may be affirmed that for the workman especially, who is employed during the whole week in manual labor, the sanctification of the Sunday is the practical summing up of his religious duties; and in order to judge of the moral state of a population, it is sufficient to remark in what way the first and second commandments are observed.

SECOND COMMANDMENT OF THE CHURCH.

To fast and abstain on the days commanded.

To fast is to deprive ourselves of a portion of our usual food, and to be contented with one meal during the day and a light collation intended to render this penitential practice less difficult.

Fasting is truly a divine institution. From the commencement of the world it has been the first and most important of penitential works, and has been practised and sanctified by patriarchs and prophets, by Our Lord and His Apostles, by the martyrs and all the Saints. Its object is to humiliate the flesh and to subdue the passions, but not to injure the strength of the body.

The Church, in imitation of her divine Master, and by command of the Apostles, has chosen fasting as the means by which her children shall practise Christian penance; all are bound to fast (who have reached the age of twenty-one) during the forty days which precede Easter Sunday, on the Vigils of great Feasts, and at those four seasons of the year called Ember Days, which introduce into each of the four seasons three days of penance and sanctification. The particular observances of fasting vary in different countries and dioceses. As this holy practice is as much a work of obedience as of mortification, the only general rule which can be given is that all must observe it as directed by the Bishop of the diocese in which they live, or, in case of doubt, the confessor or pastor must be consulted. The spirit is ever the same, though the details vary.

No one is obliged to fast before the age of twenty-one, because, until then, the constitution is not completely developed, and insufficient food might affect the health. The reasons which exempt from fasting are: 1st, physical weakness or sickness; 2d, poverty, which prevents a man from being able to choose his food, and obliges him to eat just what he can procure, whenever he can procure it; 3d, the moral impossibility which arises from hard and difficult work, from extreme fatigue; and lastly, from other circumstances, of which the confessor is the only good judge,—and in fact all these reasons must,

for greater safety, be submitted to him. The gravity of any infraction of this commandment arises especially from the disobedience it involves to a public and most important regulation of the Church of God. It is to despise the public penance of the Church, and to despise the evangelical precept, "Except ye do penance ye shall all likewise perish!"

Sunday is never a fasting day, because it is the Lord's Day; this is why Lent, which includes six Sundays, begins forty-six days before Easter instead of forty. The Vigils upon which fasting is commanded are the Eves of Whit-Sunday, of St. Peter and St. Paul, of the Assumption, All Saints, and Christmas Day. The obligation of abstaining from flesh meat on Fridays is also a very important religious law, and is similarly distinguished by the character of a public and general penance. We sanctify the week and prepare ourselves for Sunday by this bodily mortification in remembrance of the passion of Our Lord. Any violation of the law of abstinence is also a mortal sin.

And if any one should say, "That which enters into the body cannot defile the soul," or, "God does not regard the food we eat," let them, I say, clearly understand that this has nothing whatever to do with it; it is not a question of eating meat, but wholly one of obedience. However indifferent God may be as to our choice of food, He is far from indifferent as to our dispositions of obedience or rebellion; and He has not only given us a general command to do penance, but has also commanded us to obey the Church in all the regulations she may make with regard to this holy and necessary practice. The reasons required for an exemption from the law of abstinence are the same as for a dispensation from fasting. But upon this point let no one deceive themselves, it is impossible to deceive God; we should always consult the confessor who is charged with our spiritual welfare, and should also remember that it is a mortal sin not to abstain except for a truly sufficient reason.

Let the indifferent, the sinful, and the incredulous all regard us with contempt, as men who follow shadows and are weakly intent upon trifles. Is it a trifle to obey God and His Church? Is it weakness to honor the words spoken by Jesus Christ to the pastors of His Church?—"Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature; HE THAT HEARETH YOU HEARETH ME, AND HE THAT DESPISETH YOU DESPISETH ME!"

LENT.

AH! this is quite a melancholy subject, and you would prefer that it should not be forced upon your attention. It is unpleasant enough when Lent comes, and in the mean time the less said about it the better. Ever unwelcome is this holy season, and all, with the exception of a few fervent Christians, appear to regard the forty days with a feeling of vexation which almost amounts to resentment.

But with our forefathers it was not so. Full of faith, they drew from their firm belief powerful motives for energy, perseverance, and good will. They rightly estimated duty; they recognized its grandeur; and they placed the sacred laws of God and of His Church far above the vain pretexts to which our self-indulgence so often sacrifices them.

Our forefathers observed in every detail the commands of the Church with regard to fasting and abstinence; every one abstained on Fridays and Saturdays. Men did not study themselves and pamper themselves as they do now; this may be proved by the fact that at Paris in the fifteenth century, in spite of a population of hundreds of thousands of inhabitants, only one butcher sold meat during Lent, and supplied all that was required by killing a single ox a day. They fasted the whole of Lent, and no one died from the effects. Neither did they suffer, for populations were far more flourishing, and men taller and stronger than now. "But can it be," you say, "that God requires bodily mortification instead of heartfelt repentance?" To which we answer simply that God requires both, because heartfelt repentance is ever united to bodily mortification. The soul influences the body, and the body reacts upon the soul, because of their intimate union; a body that is indulged will sooner or later impart its own feebleness to the soul, its constant companion; and a soul pure and upright, and victorious over its passions, will necessarily hold the soul in perfect discipline and subjection. The body, from the fatal results of original sin, is in constant rebellion against the soul; and the soul must therefore treat it almost as an enemy, and be ever on its guard against it, in order to insure its own independence, its fidelity to God, and its eternal salvation.

"But why should such a disagreeable means of doing penance be chosen?" And why should it not be chosen? The Church has chosen it—1st. Because it is sufficiently disagreeable to constitute a penance, and not too hard to be practised by all Christians. 2d. Out of rever-

ence for the Apostles, who instituted Lent. 3d. Because such is her will, and we must all, without any exception, respect her choice and submit to her commandment.

To obey the laws of the Church is to obey Jesus Christ; to violate her laws is to neglect them, to regard them as trifles,—is to despise, to neglect, and to disobey Jesus Christ. Is this a little fault?

“I desire to obey God rather than men, and the Pope and the Bishops are men.” Yes, but men vested with divine authority, so that it is God Himself who speaks, commands, instructs, sanctifies, forbids, and governs by the lips of those whom He has sent.

“And shall God condemn me for a little meat?” No; but for the disobedience, which is all the more guilty in proportion as the law imposed is simple and easy to fulfil. Is it not utter folly to offend God for such a little thing? A man who could have fasted and abstained, yet would not, shall stand without excuse before the tribunal of his God.

“But I cannot fast or abstain; it makes me ill.” Is that quite true? Remember that it is God who must judge. If your health is really too weak, the law is not for you; the Church desires to make us do penance, and not to make us ill; she desires to deprive us of superfluous, but not of necessary, food; but, as regards what is necessary make no mistake; consult your doctor, and still more your confessor; he is the doctor of the divine law, and is gifted with grace to make it clear.

Those who have very hard work, or are extremely poor, may always obtain a dispensation, since no one can live without sufficient food.

“But it is exceedingly tiresome and disagreeable to fast!”

And this last and most feeble excuse is generally at the root of the whole matter, and should be urged first instead of last. “It is unpleasant to fulfil my duty, and therefore I will not fulfil it.” Be it so; but I warn you; make ready to travel on the road to hell, for your face is turned in that direction. Whoever fails to fulfil his duty lives in sin; and he who lives in sin shall receive, as an inevitable consequence, that eternal punishment of which Our Lord speaks so often in the Gospel, warning us to avoid at any price its inconceivable pain!

For my own part, I find it less difficult to keep the Lenten fast year after year, and to abstain on Friday, than to suffer forever in hell.

Every one is free to choose.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

THIRD COMMANDMENT OF THE CHURCH.—*To confess our sins at least once a year.*

FOURTH COMMANDMENT OF THE CHURCH.—*To receive worthily the Blessed Eucharist at Easter, or within the time appointed.*

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST instituted confession in order to make repentance easier for our weak human nature, and to assure us of the pardon of our sins. He laid down no rule as to the times and seasons at which sinners might have recourse to this sacrament of mercy; it was to be an ever-open and inexhaustible source from which we might incessantly obtain not only pardon, but peace of heart and purity of conscience.

In the first century of the Church, Christians had recourse to the sacrament of penance only when they had committed some serious fault, and not at fixed and periodical times. The early Christians had few grievous falls with which to reproach themselves: they prayed constantly, kept the days of fasting and abstinence and all holy vigils with the utmost care and devotion, meditated incessantly on the Word of God, and went to Communion every day. It may be easily understood that, to those who lived such lives, confession was not as necessary as to the tepid Christians of the present day.

But, when the barbarous nations in great numbers received the light of faith, certain negligences gradually crept into the practices of religion, resulting from the ignorance of these new children of the Church, and from the uncultured condition of their consciences. This reached to such an extent that, in some countries, the service of God was so greatly neglected that people lived almost without the sacraments, or at least allowed long periods of time to pass without receiving them. In order to remedy this abuse, Pope Innocent III., at the General Lateran Council, held at Rome in 1215, decreed that henceforth all Christians having reached the age of reason should be bound, under pain of mortal sin, of grave disobedience, and excommunication, to present themselves to the priest and confess their sins at least once a year. Those who should dare to disobey this commandment should be excluded from the great Catholic family, deprived of the public prayers and of permission to assist at the sacred offices of the Church, and, finally, if they persevered in this state until death, should be denied Christian burial. The Lateran Council

did not, as has been falsely asserted, invent confession, but simply laid down a rule with regard to it, by commanding that all should confess at least once a year.

The time of the year at which this precept must be fulfilled has never been determined; but as confession is the natural preparation for the Easter Communion, the Paschal season is that generally chosen.

We will not add anything here to defend confession against the calumny and blasphemy of those who need it most, besides the fact that there is not one out of a hundred who believes a word of all these foolish accusations. We are now only speaking of confession as commanded by the Church, and believe that sufficient has been said to make the nature and bearing of the Fourth Commandment clear.

The Lateran Council next laid down a law with regard to the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. It commanded that every Christian who had made his first communion should receive the blessed sacrament at least once a year, and that at Easter or thereabouts.

The Easter Communion is not only a work of piety; it is, besides, a kind of public protestation of the Catholic faith. The Church calls all her children to the foot of her holy altars; she invites them to the divine banquet of the Eucharist, and fixes upon the festival of Easter for this great reunion. Whoever fails wilfully to answer to her call, excludes himself from the Christian family, and excommunicates himself. He participates no longer in the spiritual possessions and benedictions of the Church, and, as a heathen, he is buried if he persevere in this voluntary excommunication.

It is a grievous sin not to fulfil the Easter duties; it is an open separation from the Church of God. If you had been so unhappy as to fail in such an important duty, you would be bound to repent without delay; to prepare yourself, by sincere contrition and a fervent confession, to atone for your negligence and to approach worthily to the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Even if the Paschal season should be past, you would still be under the obligation to communicate "at least once a year," and in such a case we can only apply the popular dictum, "Better late than never."

Because the Church commands us to communicate at least once a year, some have illogically concluded that it is not necessary to communicate more often. This is a great error, and shows an utter ignorance of the things of God. The Easter Communion is chiefly a Catholic manifestation; the other communions which we make during the year have not this character; their principal object is to fortify us against the attacks of the devil, and to strengthen within

us that life of grace which is the sanctifying union of our souls with our Creator and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Every Christian who seriously desires to labor for his own eternal salvation approaches often to the Holy Communion, not only to obey the command of the Church, but to co-operate in the merciful designs of God, who gives Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament, and sustains us thus in Christian holiness throughout our earthly pilgrimage.

The time assigned for the Easter Communion in the United States extends from the first Sunday after Ash-Wednesday to Trinity Sunday, unless it be otherwise ordered. At what age children should go to Confession and Communion must be left to the decision of their pastors. It is recommended, as a rule, to go to Confession, and, with the permission of the pastor, to Holy Communion at least once a month.

THE EASTER COMMUNION.

WE shall not speak here of the real presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. We have already discussed this great subject. But if ever a doubt with regard to it should arise in our minds, let it be sufficient for us to remember that the Son of God Himself has said, "He who believeth in Me hath everlasting life." "Take and eat; THIS IS MY BODY. Drink ye all of this; THIS IS MY BLOOD." These words alone are sufficient to disperse every shadow of doubt. But why does Jesus Christ come thus in the Holy Eucharist? Why does He descend upon our altars? Why does He travel thus divinely from heaven to earth? For one reason only. The Son of God, Our Saviour, comes to take possession of a sanctuary—of a temple, a thousand times more beautiful, a thousand times more worthy of Him, than the Temple at Jerusalem. And what can this temple be? It is your heart—your soul. Such is the temple that God has chosen. It is there He desires to descend; it is there that He loves to repose. What value after all, in His most holy sight, have those tabernacles and sacred vases in which He is sheltered by our faith and love? He is the living God; and these temples, these ciboriums, these altars—what are they but metal and stone? What He desires is a temple, living even as He lives, capable of being enlightened with His light, which is the spiritual and invisible light of truth, capable of being enkindled with the sacred flame, which is no visible fire, but the spiritual and immaterial fire of love. Such are the worshippers that God desires, worshippers in spirit and in truth, as He has said in the holy Gospel: therefore reasonable creatures, capa-

ble of knowing and loving Him and of entering into participation with His divine life.

Jesus Christ comes, therefore, in the Holy Eucharist to make our souls and bodies the living sanctuaries of God. But in order to correspond to this inestimable benefit there are, on our part, two things necessary: 1st. We must communicate; 2d. We must communicate well.

1st. We must communicate. Without this the design of God is made of no effect. It is for us that our dear Lord is present there; it is not for Himself, for He has need of nothing, and is infinitely happy; but it is out of pure mercy and compassion for us.

There is also the obligation under pain of mortal sin to communicate at least once a year, and that at Easter. This is what we call our Easter duties; and just as the festival of the Pasch formerly united the Jews of one common family year by year at the same religious banquet, even so among Christians, who are the true people of God, the great Paschal solemnity, in which the Church celebrates the mysteries of the passion, death, and triumphant resurrection of the Saviour, should gather together all the members of the Catholic family around the sacred banquet of the Holy Eucharist.

Therefore whoever fails to fulfil his Easter duties commits a grievous sin; and, if he persevere in this state of spiritual death, runs a great risk of losing the faith, or falling into hardness of heart and final impenitence, and, lastly, of becoming, throughout all eternity, the prey of the second death, by being forever separated from God in the terrible flames of hell.

2d. It is also necessary to communicate well.

To communicate well is to receive Jesus Christ present in the Holy Eucharist, with a pure conscience, a sincere desire, and a firm resolution of being henceforth faithful to God, by the assistance of His grace.

To make a bad communion is to receive the Blessed Sacrament into a soul defiled with mortal sin, and without the firm resolve of being for the future God's true and faithful servant.

To make a good communion is to perform the holiest actions and the greatest of all the good works possible to man in this world. To make a bad communion is the greatest sin by which man can offend his Saviour and his God. To make a good communion is to receive joy and consolation, peace of heart and conscience, the warrant of final perseverance and of everlasting life. To make a bad communion is to draw down upon one's self both judgment and condemnation, to sign with one's own hand the sentence of eternal woe; to

renew the crime of Judas, and to provoke the malediction of the sacrilegious.

Therefore go to communion, but communicate well. You are placed between three alternatives: 1st, to make a good communion; 2d, to make a bad communion; 3d, not to go to communion at all.

And to make a bad communion is almost the same as not to communicate at all, for it is to kill the soul. To die because we do not eat is almost the same thing as to die because we have swallowed poison. The result is the same—death.

Of these three roads two lead to hell, one only leads to heaven. Therefore choose. Communicate at Easter; but, in order rightly to fulfill this great and holy duty, prepare yourself by prayer, by spiritual reading, and by good works, as far as you are able. Go to confession some time before, especially if you are of the number of those who have delayed. Do all you can, and God will supply the rest "Peace to men of good will."

When you leave the holy altar after having fulfilled your Christian duty you will be perfectly happy, and your soul will be at peace! "Oh' if I had only known how simple it was, and how happy it makes you," said a poor workman who had stayed away from the sacraments for twenty-nine years, "I would never have waited so long."

THE FIFTH AND SIXTH COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH

By the Fifth Commandment the Church obliges us to contribute willingly, according to our means, to the support of our pastors, churches, Catholic schools, and religious institutions.

The Sixth Commandment prohibits marriage within the forbidden degree of kindred, or to solemnize marriage with those having canonical impediments, with Protestants, or within the forbidden times. (This commandment is fully explained under the "Sacrament of Matrimony," page 139.)

THE ENIGMA OF LIFE.

THERE is a very strange thing in this world, or rather the world itself is a very strange thing. On the one hand we are certain, absolutely certain, that God is infinitely good, infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful; it is no less certain that it is He who created the

world, that without Him nothing exists, and that in His infinite goodness He destines all creatures to be happy; how is it, then, that there is so much misery in life? Whence come so many griefs, so many disappointments, so much suffering of body and soul? How is it possible to explain, without reflecting on the sovereign goodness and wisdom of the Creator, the destruction, pestilence, and disease which ravage our provinces, the inundations which desolate country and town, the storms and tempests which bring ruin to so many homes? And, more than all, how can we explain that terrible and inevitable phenomenon which we call death, and which is so repugnant to the deepest instincts of our nature that the best and holiest of men tremble at its approach, although they know that it opens to them the gates of a blessed eternity? Such is the enigma of which the Christian faith alone can give the solution. It teaches us that God is infinite goodness, eternal life, and perfect order. Nothing evil, nothing disordered, can be the work of His hands. "He has not made death," as He Himself declares in the Holy Scriptures; "life cannot engender death." But from the beginning of the world a twofold revolt, in heaven and on earth, has destroyed the order established by God in all things; and this revolt, which we call sin, is the only cause of the evils which afflict us. This fatal rebellion, begun in heaven, continues upon earth. The most powerful of God's angels, the highest in the heavenly habitations, Lucifer or Satan, refused to render the adoration which God required, and was joined in his rebellion by a number of the heavenly host. They were all cast down from heaven, and on the earth Satan tempts the fidelity of man, and seeks to associate him in his own revolt and in his own damnation.

Adam, our first parent, was indeed created in innocence and happiness; the faithful angels were ever with him in his earthly paradise, and guarded him incessantly from the fatal influences of Satan; but notwithstanding this aid, and in the midst of this happiness, Adam remained free to correspond to the love of God, or, on the contrary, to turn away from Him. He succumbed to temptation, transgressed the simple commandment which God had given him, and, by this adhesion to the disobedience of the devil, made his submission to Satan, not only for himself, but for all the human race which should hereafter spring from him.

Hence all our sorrows, and hence all the evils of life. "Thou shalt die," God said to him; "cursed is the earth to thy work; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat

the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return."

Such is the penalty of sin; such is the sentence of divine justice; such is the secret of the sufferings and woes of humanity. We have been delivered into the power of the devil, who afflicts us, and we should have no heritage but despair, if the mercy of God, which is infinite as His justice, had not given us a Saviour.

This Saviour is Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who, by His incarnation in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has taken our nature upon Him, and has loved us so much that He has offered Himself to the justice of His Father as the one holy and all-sufficient victim for the rebellion of men. He suffered and died for us, and merited by the sacrifice of the Cross the pardon of our sins; He has opened to us once more the heaven from which we were excluded, and has instituted upon earth a Church and sacraments by means of which it is easy for every man to be reconciled to God and live a holy life. Jesus came to restore to us eternal life, but each one of us must gain it for himself by triumphing in his own person over that enemy whom Jesus conquered first.

Each one of us, in imitation of his Divine Master, must live united to God by obedience and love, and must patiently endure the trials which are so thickly sprinkled over the path of life.

And thus the Christian, though subject like other men to bodily suffering, to sickness, and to all the evils which result from the fatal power of the devil upon earth, is lifted by his union with Jesus Christ far out of the reach of his enemy. The terrible darts of Satan, instead of overwhelming the Christian, turn to his glory by giving him day by day new opportunities of conquest. Poverty, suffering, death itself are all transfigured for the disciple of Jesus Christ, and sometimes even the generosity of his love is such that he even welcomes and desires them, in order that he may more perfectly resemble his Saviour.

Such is the solution, too much ignored, alas! in the present day, of all the evils to which we are subject in the journey of life. Happy the faithful Christian to whom this difficult enigma is revealed, and who in the midst of trials has perfect trust in the divine love and fatherly care which watches over all!

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

IN the fourteenth century there lived at Cologne a celebrated preacher named Jean Tauler. He was renowned for his learning and his charity. One day he entered a church, and kneeling down prayed earnestly to God that He would make known to him the way in which he might serve Him best. When his prayer was ended, he went out from the church; at the door, crouching on one of the steps, was a poor man scantily covered with rags, and so disfigured that every one who saw him was moved to pity; he had lost one arm and a leg, and his face and his whole body were covered with frightful wounds. Touched with compassion, Tauler approached him, and, taking some money from his purse, said to the poor man, "Good day, my dear friend." "Thank you, sir," he replied; "but I have never had a bad day."

Tauler believed that the unfortunate man had misunderstood him: "I wish you a good day," he repeated; "I wish that you may be happy, and have all that you desire." "I quite understand," replied the beggar, "and I thank you for your charity, good master; but your wishes were fulfilled for me long ago." The poor fellow has lost his reason, thought Jean Tauler, or perhaps he is deaf; and, raising his voice, he cried, "You do not understand me; I wish you to be happy." "Ah, do not be angry, dear master," replied the poor man; "I understand you very well, and I tell you again that I am very happy, that I have all I desire, and that all my days are good and happy days."

For an instant Jean Tauler thought he was mad, but there was a tone in his voice which struck him. Therefore he went nearer to him, sat down by his side, and asked him to explain what he meant.

"O God!" exclaimed the poor man earnestly, "it is very simple. I have known from my childhood that God is wise and just and good; from my childhood I have suffered; I have been attacked by a terrible disease, so that my body has wasted away; I have always been poor. . . . I have said to myself: Nothing happens but by the will or the permission of God. And God knows better than I do what is good for me. He loves me as a father loves his child. . . . Therefore I am sure that these sufferings are for my greater good. I have also accustomed myself never to will anything but what our dear Lord wills; if He sends me sickness, I welcome it as a friend; if He gives me health, I receive it with joy: if I have nothing to eat, I fast

gladly to expiate my sins and those of others; if I have not enough to clothe myself, I think of my Saviour naked in the crib and on the Cross, and I find I am richer far than He; if I suffer on earth, I shall be happier for all eternity. . . . What shall I say to you? I am always contented: if I look miserable, I have a very light heart: I will all that God wills, and nothing that He does not will; I desire nothing but to do His holy will. So you see now, dear master, that I am very happy, that all my days are good days, and that I have all that I desire."

Jean Tauler wept in silence. He had never heard so beautiful a sermon; he gave the poor man his cloak and the only piece of silver he had in his purse, and in spite of the wounds on his face he embraced him with joy. Then he returned to the church, thanking God for having shown him the most perfect way of serving Him.

From that time he became, as far as he could, the disciple and imitator of that poor saint, and he was accustomed to say when reciting this touching adventure: "Happiness is possible in all conditions; for the poor as well as for the rich; for him who suffers as for him who is in health. Happiness is in the heart, and nowhere else; it depends upon our disposition, and not upon our position in life. Do the will of God, and you will be happy, whatever the outward circumstances by which you are surrounded."

PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS.

THERE is no error which is more pernicious or more prevalent in the present day than the confusion of these two ideas, pleasure and happiness.

Pleasure is the satisfaction of the senses. Happiness is the satisfaction of the heart. Pleasure is material, and is even more or less sensual; happiness is of a wholly different nature, it dwells within the soul, and raises man above matter!

There is as much difference and disproportion between pleasure and happiness, as between the body and the soul; and to confuse these two ideas is to fall into an ignoble and deplorable materialism. Pleasure is the happiness of the beast, of the animal which has no soul, which has only outward instincts, and lives only through the senses.

Man is, it is true, susceptible to pleasure, since he has a body with its senses: but his vocation lifts him infinitely higher. He has a reasonable soul, capable of knowing the truth, of loving and desir-

ing the good; he lives on earth only that he may go to heaven, where perfect happiness shall be his everlasting heritage. Therefore our happiness consists, first upon earth, and afterward in heaven, in the complete repose and full satisfaction of all the faculties of the soul.

And if in this world so few are happy, it is because so few seek happiness there where alone it may be found. The greater part believe that they obtain happiness in the satisfaction of their senses, and the desires of their lower passions, thus confusing pleasure with happiness. In youth especially this error is almost universal, and nothing but the marvellous teaching of the Catholic faith can provide the young with a remedy against this dangerous temptation, and with efficacious means by which they may resist it.

The profligate seeks happiness in the full indulgence of his lower nature, and, finding nothing but a sinful pleasure, feels ever in his heart a void—an unknown and unsatisfied need—which is nothing but the need of that happiness he cannot obtain.

The ambitious man imagines that he will gain happiness if he can only make a name in the world, and rise to a high position, and become a leader among men. For this he labors and lives, and in nine cases out of ten he falls far short of success, since worldly honors are somewhat difficult of attainment; and even when, having distanced a host of competitors, he reaches the goal for which he has striven, he finds greatness but a vain delusion, and that pinnacle to which his pride has raised him an utter weariness and a bitter disappointment—and why? Because happiness is not there, and the true needs of the soul are still unsatisfied.

With the miser it is the same. How many men are misers without being conscious of it? Avarice, indeed, does not solely consist in amassing gold and silver, it consists more especially in an engrossing attachment to gold and silver; it is the worship of money, of riches; and this religion has many devotees. These are they who, whatever their calling, put riches in the place of happiness, and, in order to satisfy the heart, endeavor to fill the purse! But they labor in vain; they heap money in vain; the heart cannot, like the purse, be filled with sovereigns. Where, then, is happiness? And how shall we enter into the designs of the great and merciful God who created us to be happy? By leading a pure and Christian life on earth, and thus preparing ourselves for that blessed and eternal rest in which the soul, united to the risen and glorified body, shall enjoy the perfect possession of its last end, even God Himself. Christians alone know here below the sort of true happiness, that happiness

which no power on earth can take from them, and which is independent of the vicissitudes of life. God alone, for whom, and in whom, Christians live, can satisfy the deep need of the soul; He alone reserves for Himself, as an inaccessible domain, the depth of the hearts He has created for His glory.

Therefore, if we desire to be happy on earth and in heaven, let us serve Him faithfully, and avoid sin, which is ever the harbinger of misfortune. Let us labor, without ceasing, to fulfil the holy law of God, and thus shall we surely attain the perfect repose of eternal felicity!

TO THOSE WHO SUFFER.

EVERY one has trouble upon earth: rich and poor, young and old, great and small,—none are exempt from the sad necessity of suffering. To suffer is our condition in this world. It is the state in which you and I, and our forefathers, have been born, in which our children shall be born, and from which no human effort can deliver us. For ever, and ever, and ever, there will be here below sickness, and trouble, and grief! There will be forever widows and orphans! There will be forever sorrowful mothers weeping over an empty cradle! Life, since sin entered into the world, seems to be one long sorrow; this sorrow may be softened, but it can never be taken away.

Since this is a truth—and who can deny it?—it is very useful to fix our minds often upon those considerations which may help to lighten our troubles, and to render them, if not sweet, at least profitable.

The first of these truths which religion teaches us, and which the simplest reasoning will confirm, is that nothing happens to us here below except by the holy will, or the express permission, of God; and this is equally true of the evil as of the good.

God is the Lord of the whole earth; He is the sole and sovereign ruler of the world; He governs all things, He knows all things; and not even a hair of our head, as He Himself assures us in the Holy Gospel, can fall without His will. Not a blade of grass springs up in the fields, not a single leaf falls in the forests, not a grain of sand stirs upon the earth, nor a single drop of water in the immensity of the ocean, in storm and in tempest, but the All-powerful God knows it, wills it, and commands it.

If it is thus of the inanimate creation, what must it be for us, the special object of His love? Our impatience and our murmurs come

from our want of faith. Our gaze being ever rooted to the earth, we never lift our hearts on high; wholly attentive to the secondary causes of our troubles, to those events which afflict us, to the little world around us, we fail to mount as high as heaven, and see manifest in all things the perfect will of God. We act like animals which bite the stick and not the hand which strikes them.

In thus afflicting us, God, far from being cruel to us, shows us often the greatest mercy; for afflictions are most useful to our soul, and, generally, God sends them only for our greater good.

We constantly deceive ourselves in our judgment of things. We look at everything from a point of view which is false, because it is not Christian, and all things appear to us in a wrong light. That which is in reality good we call evil, and that which is in reality evil we call good.

What is this life, and how can it be defined, if it is not a preparation for our true life, which is the life eternal? We are not placed on earth simply for our own pleasure and amusement, just to eat, to drink, to sleep, and to follow in all things our own inclinations. . . . We are here to merit, by a faithful fulfilment of the laws of our Creator, the infinite happiness of heaven, to which His goodness destines us, and which, for this reason, can alone satisfy our desires. Therefore, all that brings us nearer to this end must be good and useful. All that prepares for us a greater happiness hereafter must be wholly desirable; and, on the other hand, all that tends to diminish the happiness of the life to come must be dangerous and evil, and still more dangerous and evil all that may deprive us of that life forever. There is the reality, there is the truth, the rest is nothing but illusion. By this light, the only true light, everything must be judged.

Hence it is easy to understand that that which is good in the eyes of the world (pleasure, gayety, the abundance of all that can gratify the senses and flatter the pride), being but obstacles to the eternal life which Jesus Christ came to merit for us, are, therefore, inevitable evils, or at least are fraught with danger. And this is why Our Lord has cursed them in the Holy Gospel.

On the contrary, privation, suffering, poverty, humiliation, all that the world calls evil, is unquestionably a great good, since it draws us nearer God, recalls to us our eternal hopes, and detaches us from every obstacle to our salvation, to our true happiness. And this is also why Our Lord repeats so often: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven! Blessed are they that weep,

blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted! Behold the promise of perfect happiness, but it can only be realized in heaven; on earth, happiness is the consolation of hope, and of a peaceful, patient waiting for the joy that is to come. Therefore, lest our hope should be vain, let us choose the road which leads to paradise, otherwise this hope will prove a vain chimera, and we may take in its stead the appalling conviction that misery shall be our endless portion. This road of salvation is the Christian life, is flight from sin and hatred of it, the love of Jesus, prayer, the frequentation of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, all destined by divine goodness to enable us to advance and to persevere in the right way. Let us be wise, and not abuse the life which God has given; it is a precious treasure, and He lends it only once. Woe to him who misuses it!

Let us be willing to make any sacrifice; let us profit by all our sufferings and sorrows; soon will come the gladness of a perfect repose, and soon the moment of eternal consolation! Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God! Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill! Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!

WHAT HAVE I DONE THAT GOD SHOULD SEND ME SO MUCH SUFFERING?

THIS is the first thought that arises in the minds of many when grief and suffering come. Instead of asking God for strength to bear their troubles, they begin murmuring against Him. Men of little faith! we might say to them, even as Our Lord Jesus Christ said to His doubting disciples. Men of little faith! who understand not the secrets of God! When He visits you with suffering, never ask Him, let me warn you, such a question as this, "What have I done that I should suffer so much?" Ninety-nine times out of a hundred God might silence you by unfolding before your terrified eyes the long and shameful series of your sins, which nothing but your religious indifference could hide from your sight. These sins, so heavy and so multiplied, have a thousand times merited hell with its eternal pains, and yet you dare to complain of the punishment—comparatively so slight—which the justice of God inflicts upon you. And God might always answer by showing you the terrible flames of purgatory. What are the sufferings of the present life when compared with the fearful expiation which awaits us beyond the

tomb? Are you so pure that you can face it without trembling? Are you so blind that you cannot perceive that great suffering and long suffering awaits you in purgatory as the penance of your faults? Then is it not entirely for your good that you should suffer in this life? The flames of purgatory are the same as those of hell; the only difference is that they are not eternal. Who can dwell in a devouring fire? And is it not a great blessing to be able to avoid it greatly, if not wholly, by Christian penance, and by suffering, meekly accepted?

Lastly, God could always answer by pointing out to you heaven, the crib, and the cross. The journey of life is a fleeting probation. Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh for your salvation, gave you first the example of patience, so that, by a holy use of suffering, you might sanctify your soul, and thus accumulate an eternal weight of glory. Eternity! Eternity! Keep it ever before your eyes, but most especially when tried and tempted. Poverty and its privations, sickness with its constant anguish, even imprisonment with its long and wearisome hours, the loss of those we love,—yea, all the manifold trials of life, are instantly transfigured when the light of eternity rests on them. When you suffer, go to Jesus Christ. He is the divine Consoler. “Come to me,” He says to those with sorrow, “Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.” “Amen, Amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you.”

Oh! how well they understood these great truths, those saints who supported not only with patience, but with acts of thanksgiving with rapture and joy, those moral and physical trials which Providence sent them. What solid happiness, and what wonderful merits, they drew from the trials we receive with such affliction. Thus we see a St. Ludovine, fastened to a bed of pain for more than forty consecutive years, preserving such a perfect serenity that it might have been thought she suffered nothing.

Thus St. Louis, King of France, said, when speaking of his cap

tivity in Egypt, where he had endured much from the Saracens, "I rejoice, and I render more thanks to God for the patience which He grants me in my captivity than as if I had conquered the whole world."

St. Elizabeth, Duchess of Thuringia, driven out of her estates, with her four little children, forsaken by every one, and reduced to beggary, went to a convent of Franciscans, to whom she had been formerly a great benefactress, and caused a *Te Deum* to be sung as an act of thanksgiving to God for having granted her the precious favor of suffering for His love.

St. Joseph of Calasanza, celebrated in Italy, said that work and trouble count for nothing when we have paradise in view; and he loved to repeat the words of the Apostle St. Paul, "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us."

Courage, therefore! Whatever we may be, whether sinful or just, let us understand the adorable mystery of suffering! It is the visitation of God; it is the most precious, the most desirable gift of His mercy.

The benefit that I expect is so great, said St. Francis, that it renders all my sufferings sweet. Whoever desire to gain heaven must prepare themselves to suffer.

God found nothing more excellent to bestow upon His only Son Jesus; upon Mary, His spouse, His mother, His chosen and well-beloved creature; upon His saints; upon all His faithful children! If you suffer with Jesus Christ, you shall be glorified with Him.

It is by the cross we gain the crown.

ON PATIENCE IN SICKNESS.

SICKNESS is the sad heirloom of humanity; it is man's sorrowful possession during his earthly pilgrimage; it is the child of sin, and the precursor of that last and terrible punishment which we call death. It is a partial and anticipated destruction of that guilty flesh which, by the sin of our first parents, has fallen beneath the empire of the devil, and can henceforth only enter heaven after having been purified by the dolorous baptism of death and revived by the resurrection. God, who is infinite goodness and life itself, is not the author of sickness nor of death, even as He is not the author of sin, which is itself the cause of both. "God made not death," say the Holy Scriptures, and it is to the devil, who has "the empire of death,"

and is the "prince of this world," that all the evils which desolate humanity must be attributed. But if God is not the author of sickness nor of death, He permits both, first as an expiation, and afterward as a trial; an expiation for sin, and a trial for our sanctification. Christian patience is the consoling balm, by means of which both trials and expiation may be happily and peacefully borne, and in this we have only to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord and Master, since "He is gone before, carrying His cross."

Patience is necessary to all men, for all men must suffer, but it is especially necessary in sickness and pain, because it alleviates suffering and makes it meritorious. Patience renders us like Our Lord, who suffered so much for love of us, and has left us the adorable example of His sweetness and serenity in the midst of suffering. Patience is that Christian disposition of the soul which makes us accept and bear peacefully for the love of God, and in union with Jesus Christ, all the afflictions to which it pleases Divine Providence that we should submit. It is a victory of the spirit over the flesh, of grace over nature, which subdues the revolts of a body rebellious against pain, and causes it to submit to the perfect will of God.

It must not be imagined that patience consists in a certain insensibility to evil and to suffering. If this were the case, patience would have no merit, and suffering would be neither an expiation nor a trial.

It is related in the life of St. Francis of Sales that one day when visiting a poor sick woman, of whose wonderful resignation he had heard much, the great bishop determined to test the reality of this virtue, and to discover if she truly possessed the grace of holy patience. He therefore began to question the sick woman, to praise her tranquillity, to exaggerate her sufferings, and to admire her courage and her silence, knowing well that by this means he should discover the real sentiments of her heart. "Alas!" replied the poor woman, "if you could only look into my heart you would cease to praise me. You judge by outward appearances, and I seem to be at peace, but within all is troubled and disturbed. My patience only holds by a thread, and if it were not for God's powerful help I feel that I should give way to murmurs, complaints, and tears; but God has put a seal upon my lips so that I dare not complain; and through His mercy I know the value of the trials which He has sent me." Then the Saint, going out from her room, said to those who accompanied him, "This woman has true Christian patience. We should rejoice at her afflictions rather than pity her, for each one of her sufferings is counted before God."

St. Francis himself when he was ill gave a noble example of calmness and resignation. Practising what he had taught to others, he suffered the most acute pain with such patience and sweetness that he was never heard to utter the least complaint, nor to express a single desire which was not conformable to the holy will of God. There was ever written in his face the perfect serenity of a soul triumphant over suffering. He took without any apparent repugnance the most disagreeable medicines, submitted himself entirely to his medical advisers, and was constantly saying that his friends did too much for him. Thus, in sickness as in health, St. Francis followed in the steps of his Divine Master, obeying the command which He Himself gave to His Apostles and to all Christians: "I have given you an example, that as I have done so you do also."

COMPENSATIONS.

THERE is a charming little French song, in which an old trooper relates to the children of his native village the story of his life, of his campaigns, of his sorrows and his joys, and the touching recital concludes by these simple and consoling words:

. . . "Dans sa bonté profonde,
Dieu, qui créa grands et petits,
Fit du bonheur pour tout le monde :
En vérité, je vous le dis !"

which might be rendered—

Each human lot is pre-ordained by God ;
Thus men are born to high or lowly station,
But *happiness* He hath in love bestowed
On every creature in His great creation.

Nothing could be more true than this. There is happiness everywhere, even as there is sorrow everywhere. The great goodness of God has indisputable claims which are as absolute as the claims of His justice, but His Divine Providence has with marvellous wisdom provided certain compensations. We are all the children of God; He sends us all happiness and joy. We are all sinners; He sends us all suffering, grief, and expiations.

The poor believe that the rich enjoy every comfort, and possess unmingled happiness. They are greatly deceived.

Those who are born to high estate shed quite as many tears as their poorer brethren, and very often more. I remember calling one

day on a lady who was extremely rich; she had a handsome house, a number of servants, and an income of more than £400,000 a year. Do you know what were her first words? "You see before you," she said, "the most miserable woman in the world!" And she began telling me how for many years she had passed her days and nights in weeping, and in a constant struggle against a terrible temptation to despair. She had lost a husband whom she tenderly loved; her children were engaged in a lawsuit against each other, and her youngest son was dishonoring his name by a life of sinful excess. And yet this unhappy woman had £400,000 a year. It would be easy to mention hundreds of similar cases.

The sufferings of the rich do not resemble those of the poor: they are less material, less palpable; but they are as bitter, as deep, and as acute. The rich do not suffer from bodily privation, nor from the anguish of hunger and cold, which are indeed terrible sufferings, but they have heart troubles, bodily sickness, and mental grief; then the education which the rich receive, and the life of luxury and refinement that they lead, tend greatly to increase their sensibility to suffering, and sometimes even to such a degree that a single grief will suffice to destroy the happiness of their lives.

With the poor it is not so: God mercifully softens for them the troubles which overwhelm the rich. Experience proves it. The principal cross which the workman has to bear is that of bodily want and the severity of daily labor. Accustomed from childhood to a life of poverty, he preserves a certain simplicity which enables him to find pleasure in simple amusements.

But for the rich man all pleasure has grown monotonous, and amusements have long lost their charm and novelty. For the poor man the least possession is a treasure, the simplest dish a banquet, the simplest enjoyment a real pleasure. This is the divine plan of compensations; and it is so perfectly carried out that after much reflection it is difficult to say whether riches give happiness, or if the state of life which is most to be desired is not, after all, that humble lowly lot which the Son of God, our Saviour, chose for Himself, for His holy Mother, and for His Apostles, when, at the time of His incarnation, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

IN WHAT TRUE HAPPINESS CONSISTS.

ONE of the sweetest pictures which history presents to us is unquestionably the life of St. Francis of Assisi. He lived at the begin-

ning of the thirteenth century. In his lifetime even he was called the Seraphic, and he was indeed rather an angel than a man.

One day, accompanied by one of his faithful friends, Fra Leone (Brother Leo), St. Francis was returning to St. Mary of the Angels, where he lived. It was then winter, and very cold. The Saint had desired his companion to walk on in front of him, so that they could pray to God with greater recollection. Thus they walked on in silence, wholly occupied with divine things. "Fra Leone," cried St. Francis, "do you know in what perfect happiness consists? If we had all the riches of Italy, and all the riches of France and Germany, and of the whole world; if we could have everything by wishing for it, and had no desire ungratified, Fra Leone, my child, with all this we should not possess the perfection of happiness." And as the Saint, having said these words, became once more absorbed in meditation, Fra Leone walked on before him again, thinking over the words that St. Francis had spoken. A few minutes after he called to him again, and exclaimed with fervor, "Fra Leone, Fra Leone, if we should enjoy all the pleasures of life, and should possess all the luxuries of the world, and should be satiated with delights, believe me, Fra Leone, we should not possess the perfection of happiness." The good brother listened as before, and then walked on in silence. A third time the Saint called his friend—"Fra Leone," he said, "if we were elevated to the highest rank of human dignity; if we ruled over nations as princes and kings; if we were the masters of the world, and saw all men prostrate before us; even if God Himself should invest us with the supreme authority which He confides to the Pope, the Vicar of Christ; and we beheld the faithful come to kiss our feet and implore our benediction—even then, Fra Leone, we should not possess perfect happiness." At last, when St. Francis had called a third time to Fra Leone, and had said that happiness could not be found in the pursuit of knowledge, in the esteem of men, nor in the possession of any creature, the good brother answered, "Father, you have spoken of all those things which men chiefly desire, and have said that happiness is not to be found in them; I entreat you, therefore, to tell me in what true joy consists." And St. Francis answered, "Fra Leone, little sheep of God, true joy consists in seeking only God. If you always do His holy will, if you love Him with all your heart, if you apply yourself before all things to please your Saviour, and to follow Him to Calvary; if, like Him, you are meek and humble of heart, if you pardon those who offend you, if you do good to all for the love of Jesus, if you weep for your

sins in perfect penitence; in a word, if your conscience is upright and pure, and if your soul is prepared by a truly holy life for the eternal happiness of heaven—Fra Leone, my child, this is true joy, and you shall be happy with a perfect happiness.” While speaking thus, the face of St. Francis grew radiant, and his eyes were bathed in tears. Brother Leo listened as to a voice from heaven, and derived such profit during the whole of his life from the lesson he received that he lived full of merit and died in the odor of sanctity.

LITTLE VIRTUES.

THAT which is little in the eyes of man is often great in the sight of God; and the Christian faith teaches us that God loves the simple and lowly of heart. Judging only by outward appearances, we may divide all virtues into two classes, little and great. Great virtues, or at least those which men call great, are brilliant and striking qualities, such as claim universal notice and admiration; while those which men call little are simple, hidden virtues, concealed from the eyes of the world, and absorbed, as it were, in the sweet completeness of a good and holy life.

“Every one,” said St. Francis of Sales, in his ever gentle, gracious words, “every one desires to have brilliant virtues and to display them, fixed to the cross, so that they may be seen and admired from afar. Very few are eager to gather those which, like the thyme and violet, grow at the foot and in the shadow of that tree of life. Yet these are they which have the sweetest perfume, and have been most freely watered with the Blood of Jesus, who gave this precept to His children as their most important lesson, ‘Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.’”

It is not every one who is called upon to exercise the great virtue of magnanimity, firmness, patience, endurance, constancy, and courage. The occasions which call them forth are very rare; yet all desire to possess them, because they are seen and known of men, and thus even human vanity is often unconsciously soothed and gratified. As to little virtues, the world esteems them not, but passes them utterly by, and the heart that desires them must needs be pure and true. Who, indeed, pays any attention to the virtue which gently yields to another’s ill temper, and patiently bears with another’s imperfections, which meekly endures a little injustice, an unreasonable prejudice, a distasteful companionship, and all the thousand little pinpricks which do so goad and irritate our faulty human nature.

that we may truly call them the small miseries of life? Who troubles to praise or to exalt the humility of those who bear a refusal with sweetness, who are grateful for a benefit, who treat their inferiors with kindness and courtesy, and are tender and pitiful to the poor? All these we consider mere trifles; we desire only those virtues which St. Francis of Sales described as "*braves et bien vêtues*," viz., virtues which are dazzling and outwardly attractive; and we do not consider that life is so made up of little things and trifling actions that for extraordinary virtues there is very little room. Opportunities for making a fortune are not to be met with every day; but every day we may gain a little, and if we do but husband our small resources, we shall certainly grow rich in time. We should quickly accumulate great spiritual riches, and should lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, if we would but employ in God's most holy service all the little occasions which we meet with every moment.

Let us therefore rejoice that we can so easily please God, and become perfect. Let us never lose one happy chance of sanctifying our life, but, lifting our hearts in prayer, let us consecrate our most trifling actions, our lightest labors, and our lightest cares, by offering them to God. Let us do all for Jesus, and we shall not lose our reward: like the ant, which during the summer accumulates little by little its provisions for the winter, we shall find, when life's labor is over, that we shall reap in a glorious and eternal harvest the reward for which we have worked so humbly here below.

MEEKNESS.

By speaking to you of meekness, and by trying to induce you to practise it, let me assure you that I am doing you a very great service. For meekness is the fountainhead from which a sweet and virtuous nature springs; and to possess a sweet and virtuous nature is also to possess the secret of a happy life. Meekness is that Christian virtue, most rare and lovely, which enables us to yield constantly to others for the love of God, to bear everything from them, and to give them as little as possible to bear from us. Meekness is to our daily life just what oil is to the motion of a machine. The oil which is dropped into the wheelwork does not seem of such great importance. And yet, if it were forgotten, what creaking, what straining, and what obstructions would be the result! And thus it is with meekness. It is the virtue of virtues, incessantly enjoined upon us by our Heavenly Father as the balm of all our actions, the greatest

preservative of society, and that most exquisite flower of Christian charity, which it is necessary to practise at all times and in every place.

Humility and gentleness, such is the great lesson which Our Saviour hath bequeathed to us. Jesus is called the Lamb of God in the Holy Scriptures, not only because of the sacrifice of the cross, but because of the perfect all-enduring meekness which He showed during His whole life, and especially during His Passion. Never a reproach, never one word of anger! When standing bound before Caiphas, He received a blow and was treated as a blasphemer; He answered simply to the servant who struck Him, "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?" Our blessed Lord preserved this marvellous meekness even unto death. When He was hanging on the cross in the last terrible agony, He could speak only words of sweetness to His murderers. He prayed God, His Father, to pardon them, and consoled with a divine hope the penitent thief crucified at His side!

"Nothing gives so much edification to others as meekness," said St. Francis de Sales, who was himself a perfect model of Christian gentleness. In him this beautiful virtue was ever conspicuous. His looks, his words, his manner, all was sweetness. Saint Vincent de Paul, who had the happiness to see him, said that he had never known so meek a man, and added that he seemed to see in him a living picture of the Saviour's loving-kindness. If he refused a favor which he could not grant without wounding his conscience, he would do so with so much love and gentleness that those who had asked it would always leave him with as much content as if it had been granted. He was equally good and kind to all; to his superiors, his equals, his inferiors, in his own family, and in the midst of strangers; how great a contrast to those who, in his own words, appear to be "*des anges dans la rue, et les diables à la maison.*" He never complained of any oversight on the part of his servants, and whenever he gave them any directions it was with the greatest kindness. Gentleness is always the best method of enforcing obedience, and the words of the Gospel are verified every day: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land." "I have tried to govern in many different ways," said St. Jane Frances of Chantal, "and I have never found a better way than that which is based upon gentleness and patience."

We often hear very pious people, Christian women, for instance, complain that they cannot lead their husband or their children back

to God. Why do they not use the only means by which they may attain the end they so greatly desire? Are flies ever attracted by vinegar? Much more is gained by gentleness than by severity, and St. Vincent de Paul said that during his life he had given three severe reprimands, thinking that he had good reason to do so, and not one had any effect; while those which he had administered with gentleness had always had a good result.

St. Francis de Sales, by his sweetness, could obtain from others all that he wished, and he often succeeded in converting the most obstinate sinners who had resisted every effort until then. This was also the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul. This holy priest once confided a great sinner to the care of a missionary of his company, in the hope of his conversion; but all was in vain, and the missionary entreated St. Vincent to use his own influence; and the Saint, having spoken for some instants to the man, converted him without trouble. This sinner afterward declared that it was the gentleness and charity of the Saint which so quickly touched his heart.

It is when we are moved to anger, or too harshly reproved by a superior, or insulted by another, that it is especially necessary to practise meekness. Oh, how dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus are those meek and humble souls which, for love of Him, bear affronts with patience, pardon their enemies, and return good for evil! It is not difficult to be sweet-tempered when nothing occurs to vex us; but just a little contradiction, and behold! we grow indignant, and throw out fire and flames like Mount Vesuvius. We must have a truer meekness than this, and must pass through this life as a lily among thorns. The true Christian ever preserves a peace in his heart which influences every action, and is visible to all, and this in adversity as in prosperity.

When we are obliged to answer some one who has insulted us, let us be careful to do so with gentleness. A soft answer will extinguish the fire of anger. When moved it is better to be silent, and if through human weakness we are sometimes carried away by anger, let us immediately endeavor to grow calm, and seek an opportunity of speaking kindly to him who has offended us.

Let us carefully avoid giving way to ill-temper and angry feelings. Those who truly love God are never ill-tempered, because the thought of the presence of God, and of His holy will, calms the soul even in the midst of contradictions, and thus the true Christian is gentle and courteous to every one. But this gentleness cannot be obtained without a constant effort, nor without a great love of Jesus Christ, and a

faithful practice of religion. Experience teaches us that we are never so charitable to others as when we are faithfully serving God. In this as in everything, religion shows herself sole mistress of the happiness of men; and if life is hard and bitter, it is because they reject and will not listen to her gentle voice.

HUMILITY.

IN one of the most divine passages of the divine Gospel, Our Lord Jesus Christ declares that Christian perfection consists in understanding and practising two words: humility and meekness. "Come to me," He says to us, "all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light."

What, therefore, is humility, and what is meekness? Two excellent subjects for meditation.

Humility is a Christian virtue, which enables us to perceive our own misery and nothingness, and to render to God the glory and honor of all the good we do; it subdues our foolish pride, and teaches us never to exalt ourselves or to despise others.

Humility is a virtue, that is to say, a victory and a strength. We are all inclined, by reason of original sin, to pride, vanity, and vainglory. In order to repress this evil tendency, we need strength, and must ever wage a constant and untiring combat. This strength is no other than the virtue of humility.

Humility is a Christian virtue. The strength which is bestowed on us in order to subdue our pride comes to us from Jesus Christ, the only source of every grace. By baptism Jesus Our Saviour established Himself in our soul as a king in His kingdom, as a master in His house; and He imparts to us the spirit of holiness to communicate to us all His virtues, and, among others, His most holy and most perfect humility. Jesus Christ is, therefore, the first principle of the humility of His disciples; and the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Our Saviour that we may be like unto Him, is the inexhaustible source of humility. By the sacrament of confirmation this divine Spirit communicates to us all the strength of Jesus, and thus bestows on us the most powerful means of triumphing over every vice, and especially over pride. This strength is nourished and increased by the Holy Eucharist and by constant prayer, and by these means alone can we possess the secret of perseverance in Christian humility.

Humility makes known to us what we truly are, and reveals to us our utter insignificance and unworthiness. In order that we may detest pride and resist it, Jesus Christ teaches us clearly that it is only a folly and an illusion. The proud man persuades himself that he is a most blameless and indeed an almost perfect character; he is full of self-complacence; he desires and seeks the good opinion of men, and is irritated and surprised if they fail to regard him with the same amount of esteem and admiration that he bestows so lavishly upon himself. All these sentiments are false, contrary to the truth, and are only a lying illusion by which Satan, the father of lies, seeks to destroy our souls. By ourselves and of ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing. All the good, which is in us comes from Jesus Christ and belongs to Jesus Christ, even our very existence, of which He is the Creator, and which depends wholly upon Him. The light which is shed over the whole earth comes from the sun; and does not this light remain even here below the sun's peculiar property? Supposing that the earth could think and speak, what would you answer if it said to you, "Look at me, and behold my splendor; this light is mine, it is my own possession, and all the glory and honor due to it are mine"? You would laugh in derision, and might in justice reply, "O foolish and self-deceived! of thyself thou art nothing but a dark, dense, heavy mass; all the splendor which transfigures thee, all the light which surrounds thee, comes from the sun and belongs to the sun, yes, even to the feeblest, faintest ray. Wait a little till the night shall come, and thou shalt be dark as any dungeon." And thus it is with Jesus Christ and every one of us. Jesus is the principle of all the good we possess, the source of all light, strength, and perfection, and we depend entirely upon Him. It is the Apostle St. Paul who asks, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Therefore, of ourselves and by ourselves we are nothing, and we merit nothing, no honor, no esteem, no glory.

But we must go further, and must recognize by the light of humility that not only are we nothing of ourselves, but we are miserable sinners, worthy of punishment and all confusion. Our sins come not from God, but wholly from ourselves; and sin being evil, despicable, and deserving of punishment, it is quite natural that in our character of sinners we should be filled with shame, and should sincerely despise ourselves, and acknowledge the perfect justice of the punishments and humiliations which God sends us from time to time.

The Christian who loves his Saviour delights to render Him the honor which belongs to Him, and to annihilate himself in the divine Presence, acknowledging simply and peacefully that he is a poor sinner, and that he confides only in the love and the mercy of God.

Humility is thus a pure act of divine love, and it is this which constitutes excellence. Humility is the perfection of the love of God, just as meekness is the perfection of love for our neighbor, while both united are the perfection of a true love for ourselves. It may be easily understood how a Christian who is truly humble shrinks from seeking his own glory, and thus appropriating that which belongs to Jesus Christ. By humility we become imbued with a perfect sense of honor, as regards our relations both with God and men. And is it honorable, let me ask, to take and keep that which belongs of right to another? All honor, praise, esteem, glory, and greatness belong to God alone, the author and principle of every good. Humility is truth and justice. It is, in the order of religion, just what justice and honesty are in our relations with society and with our fellow-men. Humility prevents us from exalting ourselves and despising others. Do we know the secrets of God, and the measure of grace which every soul receives? I may presumptuously compare myself with my brother, and imagine that I am more devout, more charitable, more spiritual than he. I may perceive that my intellect is clearer, my memory stronger, and my judgment upon all occasions superior; but is this any reason that in reality and in the sight of God I should possess any greater merit? Not in the least; for here all things are relative, and all must render according to that which they receive. The servant who, having received only two talents, gained two talents more, was made in all things equal to him who had received five talents and gained five talents more. "And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." This is true of all the gifts, both natural and supernatural, which God in His infinite wisdom bestows upon each one of His creatures. Let us never compare ourselves with others, or esteem ourselves above others, because we do not possess even the fragments of the knowledge which we need to enable us to form an equitable judgment. Let us especially guard against despising any one; the Pharisee in the parable despised the poor publican whom God blessed and exalted on account of his humility. The man whom you despise, the sinner you condemn, the woman from whom you shrink, may be, each and all, converted and become great saints. Let us detest, despise, and unhesitatingly condemn the evil which is in

them, even as we condemn it in ourselves; nothing is more just, more Christian, and more salutary; but let us ever distinguish between the sinner and the sin, and faithfully preserve Christian charity in deep humility.

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, grant to us a true humility!

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT."

THESE words were pronounced by our blessed Lord at the very commencement of that part of His preaching which we call the Sermon on the Mount. And who are they whom He declares blessed and to whom He promises eternal happiness? What is signified by these words of the Gospel, *Pauperes Spiritu*? God is the Father of light, the Creator of the human intellect, the Sovereign Lord of wisdom and of science; faith is a divine and radiant light superadded to the light of human reason; and the want of intelligence and education has ever been regarded by the Christian religion as a great misfortune and a thing most worthy of compassion; therefore the poor in spirit must not be sought for, as has been falsely asserted, only among the poor and ignorant, since the virtue so greatly commended by Our Lord may be practised by the loftiest intellect as well as by the lowliest. The words of the Gospel simply mean, Blessed are they whose hearts are detached from the perishable possessions of the world. Blessed the Christian who, for the love of God, is detached from the riches, the honors, and the fleeting joys of earth. In exchange for the worthless possessions he has renounced, God shall give to him an eternal reward, and even here on earth he shall live a life of union with his Saviour and his God if he only persevere in this pure and perfect love.

Evangelical poverty of spirit is therefore simply the spirit of poverty and voluntary detachment from all that is not God; it is the spirit of humility; it is the perfection of the love of Jesus; and this is why Our Lord promises the kingdom of heaven as its reward. All the Saints have been in this divine sense poor in spirit.

St. Francis of Sales was perfectly poor in spirit; he desired nothing but the love of God and the accomplishment of His holy will; he never considered himself, he gave to the Church and to the poor all that he possessed, and thought so little of himself that he was contented with anything, with sickness as with health, with insult as with honor, with poverty and want as with comfort and luxury. He gave away everything, even his clothes and his furniture. He

wore such shabby things that a beggar, to whom some of his clothes had been given, was very indignant and went to complain to St. Francis, who could not help laughing at the sight of the tattered garments.

St. Charles Borromeo, the great cardinal and archbishop of Milan, who belonged to a princely family, and had an immense revenue, gave away everything he possessed; he was only severe to himself, sleeping on a wooden board, eating nothing but bread and peas, drinking only water, and sparing himself no trouble and fatigue; and it is said that once eight patches were counted on his scarlet robe. This great and good man was also poor in spirit.

St. Francis of Assisi, the sweetest and gentlest of the Saints, was known in his youth as the bravest cavalier and the most brilliant and accomplished young man of his country and his time. But he forcibly realized that heaven was of far higher value than earth, and that it was the truest wisdom to despise the trifling pleasures of the world and to press forward to the eternal realities that lie beyond. He renounced everything, even the rich attire which marked his family and his rank, and, clothed in the coarsest habit, a cord for his girdle, barefooted, and destitute of everything but the one treasure he desired, even Jesus, his Master and Lord, he cried, his eyes bathed with tears, his heart filled with joy and inflamed with love, "*Deus meus et omnia!*—My God and my all!"

And thus it is with all the Saints and, to a certain extent, with all true Christians. If we would be the disciples of Jesus Christ, if we ever desire to reach heaven, we must be poor in spirit, that is, ready to renounce every worldly advantage for the service and love of our divine Master. Those who have not this spirit fall far short of all the Gospel inculcates, and the kingdom of heaven is not for them. Poverty of spirit is the sublime epitome of Christian morality.

❁ FOURTH PART ❁

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

IN all the works of God there is nothing that is worthless or insignificant. The smallest flower, a grain of dust, the tiniest insect, each and all reveal the wisdom, the omnipotence, the infinite greatness of their Creator, as clearly as the sun itself and all the glories of the starlit heavens.

And thus it is with the Christian religion; it has come forth, like the great world of nature, from the hands of God Himself; or, rather, it is that manifestation, that revelation, which God has made of Himself to the reasonable creatures whom He has deigned to create. And therefore we may discover, even in the smallest details of the faith we hold, a depth and beauty no less wonderful than the loveliness of nature; and in contemplating both we may truly exclaim, God alone could work such wonders; the finger of God is there! Let us take, for example, the sign of the Cross, that simple religious act which is so universal and so frequently practised during the course of the day. We all make this holy sign, but how many of us give any thought to the mysteries it signifies! It is thus that the ox and the horse browse on the sweet flowers hidden in the meadow grass, unconscious that they are there.

From want of reflection, we fail to attach to the sign of the Cross the importance that it merits. It was first instituted by the Apostles themselves, who, invested with the authority of Jesus Christ, taught this religious practice to the first disciples of the Gospel.

The sign of the Cross is the sign of the Christian, that is to say, it is the outward sign which distinguishes the Christian from other men. And why is this?

1st. Because it recalls to him who makes it, and to those who see it made, that Jesus Christ is the God of Christians and the Lord of their whole lives. Because it reminds us that God has loved us so much as to give Himself up for our sakes to suffer on the Cross, and that we must love Him with our whole hearts. It places incessantly before our eyes Jesus Christ crucified; and Jesus crucified is the di

vine and living rule of life to each one of His disciples, and His sacred Cross their moral law. The sign of the Cross recalls to him who makes it with reverence and devotion that he is bound to imitate in his daily conduct the penance, mortification, humility, meekness, patience, detachment, chastity, and obedience of his Master; His love for His heavenly Father and His Blessed Mother, and toward all men; His mercy to His enemies, and His love of suffering.

2d. The sign of the Cross is distinctively the sign of the Christian, because it reminds him of the blessed eternity which awaits him. It was after His passion and death that Jesus rose again. And by His Cross He entered into glory. And so it must be with His disciples. Their glory in heaven must be the full fruition of the crucified life they have led on earth, like unto the life of their Saviour. The Gospel also declares to us that when He shall come at the last day to judge the world, the sacred sign of the Cross shall appear in the heavens, to be recognized by the elect with thankfulness and love, and by the reprobate with fear and trembling; for then shall it be the disciples of the Cross, and none but they, whom He will acknowledge for His own.

3d. It is the sign of the Christian because it brings before his mind the most important doctrines of religion. It recalls the mystery of the holy and undivided Trinity, for in making it we say, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; three persons, but one God. In the name; and not, In the names. And also the mystery of the Incarnation, that is to say, the coming down of the Son of God from heaven to earth, to assume a body and soul like ours in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; for, in saying "In the Name of the Son," we move the hand down from the forehead to the breast, a lively image of the annihilation of the Son of God, who reposes in the hearts of the faithful, as formerly in the chaste womb of Mary. And, again, the mystery of the Redemption, since it was upon the Cross He died to wash away our sins, to merit for us pardon and salvation, and to open the gates of heaven which sin had closed. And the mystery of the Church of God, that great society of the disciples of Jesus Christ, that perfect union, holy, Catholic, and apostolic, of the children of the Cross; since, being the same for all, it is necessarily the sign of their union in one body under one head: a most distinctive mark of the Catholic Church, for it recalls by its unity that the Church is one, and by its universality that the Church is Catholic.

In considering all that is symbolized by this sacred sign, we may

therefore clearly understand why it is employed by the Church in the administration of all holy things, in the sacraments, in every blessing, at the beginning and end of her prayers.

Let us make it often, but especially when tempted and when troubled; also before and after meals; and when we make it, let us be careful to remember what it signifies, and the obligations imposed on all who bear the holy name of Christians.

ON REVERENCE FOR THE SIGN OF THE CROSS.

Too much importance cannot be attached to the necessity of making this sacred sign with reverence and devotion. Any Catholic who with love performs this simple act of piety will soon see its excellent effects, and we propose it to all as one of the easiest and most efficacious means of sanctifying the day.

It is necessary to be very careful never to make the sign of the Cross badly; that is, to make it from habit without thinking of it, and when laughing, or to make it in haste without taking the trouble to move the right hand from the forehead to the breast, and from the left shoulder to the right. It is not necessary every time you cross yourself to say, "In the Name of the Father," etc.; it is good and beneficial to repeat this invocation, but it is both useful and holy to cross yourself without saying anything.

Nothing is more edifying than to see a Christian make the sign of the Cross with care and reverence and in a truly Catholic spirit. The celebrated Père de Ravignan always crossed himself with scrupulous care; any one might see that he was proud to sign himself with the Cross of Christ. By this he preached even before preaching, and made a deep impression upon his hearers without having said a single word. A Protestant clergyman who went to hear him one day at Notre Dame said to his companion, after having seen the venerable religious sign himself with such holy and majestic gravity, "He has preached already; the sermon is finished and we might go."

The sign of the Cross rightly made unites the soul to God, gives the spirit of recollection, drives away the devil, and powerfully dissipates temptation; it gives to the Christian the spirit of faith, and preserves him from distraction and from worldliness; but if made with negligence, it loses all its influence and virtue.

Parents and masters should carefully impress upon children this religious practice; and since children are like little monkeys, who

imitate all they see, fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses should begin by practising what they teach, and should always, both at home and at church, before and after work, before and after meals, make the sign of the Cross like true and faithful Catholics.

And now let me ask, have you felt a little conscience-smitten while reading this chapter? How do you make the sign of the Cross? Do you make it often during the day? Form now an earnest resolution to do all things in the spirit of faith, and never to make with indifference and distraction the sacred sign of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE PATER NOSTER.

WE read in the Holy Gospel that Our Lord was praying one day, and that when His prayer was ended His Apostles approached Him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." And Jesus answered them, "When you pray, say: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen." Then He added, to increase our confidence, "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves? And he should answer and say, Trouble me not. . . . Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. . . . And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. . . . And which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? . . . If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?"

We must therefore pray with great confidence in the goodness of God; and we are sure to pray as He would have us when we speak the words which He Himself has taught us. But to do this in the best way possible, we ought thoroughly to understand the whole of this beautiful prayer, since every word contains a lesson that is divine.

The "Our Father" (or the Lord's Prayer) is composed of three parts—1st. A little preface. 2d. Three petitions which relate directly to God. 3d. Four petitions which relate directly to our own needs and those of our neighbor. The preface consists of these

words, "Our Father who art in heaven." The three petitions which relate directly to God are these—1st. Hallowed be Thy name. 2d. Thy kingdom come. 3d. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The four petitions which relate directly to our own needs and those of our neighbor are—1st. Give us this day our daily bread. 2. For give us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. 3d. Lead us not into temptation. 4th. Deliver us from evil. Amen means So be it; or, May God grant me what I ask.

What could be more sweet or grand than this sacred prayer? Are not the first words sufficient to win the hearts of men?—"Pater noster—Our Father." Christians, it is a Father to whom we speak, a merciful Father who loves us, who bends down from the heights of His eternal glory to lift us by love up to Him. It is a Father, not a master, not a judge. He asks only filial confidence, good-will, and sincere love. How sweet it is to kneel at the feet of such a God!

We do not only say, "My Father," but "Our Father," for we are all brothers, members of one family, which is the Church of Jesus Christ. The Father of the family is our Father in heaven; our Mother is the Blessed Virgin Mary, who became the spouse of the Holy Ghost by the mystery of the Incarnation. Our brethren in heaven are the Saints who have lived before us, and are now gathered into their Father's home. And we, who are by baptism children of God, children of Mary, brethren of Jesus Christ, and brethren of the saints and martyrs, form here on earth one great family united to that family in heaven. We have a visible Father, the vicar of our invisible, omnipotent Father above—the head of the Church, whom we call, for this reason, Our Holy Father the Pope; our Mother is the Church, and all Christians are our brethren, and we all meet together at the sacred banquet of the Eucharist, being all fed by the same mysterious food, and thence deriving the strength we need to travel on through the journey of life until we go home to our Father in heaven.

See all that is comprehended in the first words of the Pater Noster. And where does our Father live? "In heaven." Therefore our dwelling-place and our true country are not here on earth; it is not to the things of earth that we must give the heart; our dwelling-place, our hopes, our treasures must all be in heaven, in that blessed eternity which shall succeed the fleeting years of life. How powerful a motive to enable us to resist the temptations by which we are surrounded! Let us turn from that which is passing to that

which shall forever endure. Let us love our Father and think constantly of the happiness He has prepared for us above.

Does not this little preface contain many subjects for meditation?

In the second part of this prayer Our Lord teaches us to ask His Father and our Father to spread over the whole earth the glory of His name. "*Sanctificetur nomen tuum*—Hallowed be Thy name." Yes, known, revered, loved, glorified, celebrated, praised; first, by ourselves, then by all our brethren, by the good and holy who honor it so perfectly, by sinners who blaspheme and reject and forget it. By these words we ask the propagation of the Christian faith throughout the universe, the extinction of idolatry, the conversion of heretics, infidels, and blasphemers; we ask that God will raise up holy priests and learned doctors of the faith, who will teach us by writing and preaching to know and serve our heavenly Father better; we solemnly protest against the terrible habit of blaspheming the sacred name of God, and we all strive in union to make compensation by our homage for the daring attacks of the impious; and thus, as if we would deafen and silence the voice of blasphemy that it might never mount upward to His ears, we cry with one heart and with one voice, *Sanctificetur nomen tuum*. "Father, Thy name be blessed, Thy holy name be praised, adored, loved, glorified in heaven."

"Thy kingdom come." This is the second petition of the Pater. And here we ask of God that the reign of His divine grace may be established and strengthened within us; that mortal sin may never stain our conscience; that we may never commit a wilful venial sin; that Jesus, the King of our souls, may govern us without any opposition, and find us wholly submissive to His sacred rule.

This petition is also a desire for the extension of the Catholic Church over the whole earth; for the Church is the kingdom of God, and the establishment of His divine reign in the midst of His own creation.

And thus we also ask and desire the coming of Our Lord, since the kingdom of God can only be completely established in this world by the second advent of Our Redeemer, who upon that day will quell and annihilate forever the rebellion of Satan and the triumphs of sin.

And, lastly, we thus renew day by day our desire of eternal happiness, and sigh for heaven, where our dear Lord has prepared for us a place, that we may reign eternally with Him.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is the third petition of the Pater.

There is nothing so truly good, so truly necessary, in this world as to know and accomplish the holy will of God. Outside of the divine will all is vanity and often sin. Good does, in a manner, cease to be good when done without regard to the will of God. Take an example: A man may say, "I am a workman and the father of a family; it is the will of God that I should labor honestly to gain a living for myself, my wife, and my children; if, instead of working, I passed my days, like sisters of charity, in praying, in nursing the sick, etc., I should neglect my duty and should do wrong. And yet, what can be better in itself than prayer, or nursing the sick? But for myself, under the circumstances in which Divine Providence has placed me, such works are not for me; and, though they are more perfect in themselves than manual labor, if I prayed instead of working, I should not be doing the will of God, and therefore for me that which is good would cease to be good."

The one thing necessary is to know and fulfil with love the holy will of God. In this, and for each one of us, all duty, all virtue, and all perfection consists. If each would do the will of God in that position in which His merciful Providence has placed them, peace, happiness, and order would have a universal reign. God wills only that which is good; He forbids only that which is evil. All that is good and useful to man, God wills; all that is hurtful to him, God forbids. Thus the will of God is our happiness, and happiness is the inevitable accomplishment of His will. As soon as we disregard it, misfortune comes upon us. For instance, a man who is the head of a house and the father of a family is, perhaps, an utterly miserable and disappointed man. And why is this? It is because his children despise his authority, or because his wife has forgotten her marriage vows, or because, through the dishonesty of others, he has lost his little fortune. But would not a remedy for all these evils, and for the grief which they occasion, have been found in the accomplishment of the will of God?

God willed that the children should be obedient, respectful, and attentive to the wishes of their father; God willed that the wife should be faithful, and patient, and true; God willed that the friend should be loyal and honorable, regarding the rights of others. They have not followed the will of God, and sin and sorrow are the inevitable consequences of this rebellion.

And therefore when we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," it is as if we said, "O my God, I desire that I and all for whom I pray should be good and happy. I desire that all men

should do good and avoid evil, that each one should perfectly fulfil his duty; first of all his duty as a Christian, and then his duty as a faithful subject, as a father, husband, son, and friend: his duty as a pure, upright, and honorable man." Could anything be better than this? It is to say, in other words, "I desire that the whole earth may be the abode of peace and happiness; and that when this earthly probation is ended, I and all for whom I pray may receive in heaven the imperishable rewards of virtue."

Only Jesus Our Lord could have expressed so much in such few and simple words.

And then if you suffer, if you are poor, if you are afflicted—and truly we do not want for troubles in this land of exile!—what perfect peace this thought will give you, It is the will of God! Yes, He wills it; not to cause you suffering, He is too pitiful for that; but to prove your fidelity, to enable you to merit a greater happiness in heaven, to purify you more completely from those stains of sin which, but for this expiation, would retain you long in the terrible flames of purgatory! This is why God sends you suffering. Receive it with resignation, if not with joy; and let it always lead us to lift our hearts to our merciful Father, and pray that He will take us to heaven after a life which He has purposely embittered to us by the trials He sends us as we journey on; and in every grief let us constantly say to Him, "O my good God, my heavenly Father, may Thy will be done in me, may I never murmur against the accomplishment of Thy holy will!" We may well treasure these words of the "Our Father." Happy he who can understand them, and still happier he who takes them as the only rule of his life and his desires!

We have now only to speak of the four last petitions, which relate to our spiritual and temporal needs.

1st. "Give us this day our daily bread." Our Lord thus enjoins us to ask from God all the daily necessities of life. He desires that we should remember that God in His divine Providence watches over us and never forgets us.

It is our daily bread for which He wishes us to ask, or only that which we truly require; so that we may be able to say with St. Paul, "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content," not desiring that which is superfluous. It is like the manna of the Hebrews in the desert. Every morning it fell in great quantities around their camps, and every one collected enough for the day; but those who took more would find it spoiled and full of

worms. We should live on from day to day without undue anxiety about that future which does not belong to us. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." And every day we shall receive the grace we need to bear the cross the day shall bring, but not grace for the day that shall follow; then we must ask again from God. Let us therefore limit our desires to our present necessities: "Give us *this day* our daily bread."

2d. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." We sin every day, and every day we must ask pardon for our sins. God is so good, and His mercy is an inexhaustible abyss! Whatever our sins may be, however numerous, however grievous, we must never despair like Judas.

And in this petition we may see a wonderful means of reconciliation which divine mercy presents to all without distinction; for here the Eternal Judge, Jesus Christ Himself, declares to us that if we pardon those who have sinned against us, God our Father will surely pardon us. Who, then, can despair of forgiveness? "Pardon me, O my God," we may pray; "for I pardon all who have done me wrong. I know that Thou hast promised, and I rest upon Thine own infallible word."

And thus, for all true Christians, evil is changed into good. If any one injures us we have only to rejoice and to say, "I have been long burdened with sins, and trembled at the debt I knew not how to pay. Now God Himself has made my way clear. I will pardon this injury, this wrong, this outrage, with my whole heart, for the love of Jesus Christ, and I am assured that all my sins will be remitted by God. I pardon as a Christian should, and have nothing more to fear from my Eternal Judge." But in order to say this we must forgive wholly and sincerely, and reject for the future any idea or voluntary thought of revenge.

3d. "Lead us not into temptation." Our life on earth is a combat; our reward is Paradise. Our weapons are prayer, vigilance, and the sacraments; our enemies are the devil, the world, and the flesh. We must fight with courage, and must never grow tired. Temptations meet us upon every side, and they must be treated as a besieging army trying to take a town by assault. Repulsed upon one side, it endeavors to scale the walls upon another. The besieged must be ever on their guard, and meet every attack with a constant resistance. The spiritual weapons with which we must engage in our spiritual warfare are—vigilance over ourselves, flight from occasions of sin, frequent prayer, recollection of the presence of God, and espe-

cially confession and communion. Whoever uses these means is sure not to give way to temptation; whoever neglects them is equally sure to succumb to it.

4th. "Deliver us from evil." The greatest evil of all is sin, and eternal damnation, the punishment of sin. It is from this twofold evil that we ask deliverance every day. We may, indeed, ask to be delivered from sickness, from poverty, and from other temporal evils, but, as these afflictions are often just what we need the most, because of God's special designs in sending them, we must always add to our prayer for deliverance the words that Jesus Christ taught us Himself when, in His agony in the garden, He prayed, "Yet not My will, but Thine be done." God knows what we need far better than we can know, and when He sends us troubles it is in infinite mercy and goodness. Let us therefore ask our blessed Lord to deliver us from the terrible evil of hell and its eternal flames; from sin, from attachment to sin, and from all the vices which are its natural fruits.

The word AMEN, which is the ending of every Christian prayer, should be uttered with reverence and attention, since it expresses the ardent desire we have to be heard.

Let us, then, meditate on all these beautiful words, and strive earnestly to say the Lord's Prayer with greater recollection than hitherto. Fathers and mothers should teach their children to understand it, and impress upon their minds that it must not be said as a vain repetition and only with the lips, but that they must lift their hearts to God in faith and love, if they would have Him hear and bless them when they say, "Our Father."

THE AVE MARIA.

THE Ave Maria, or Angelical Salutation, is the most beautiful and popular of all the prayers which Christians address to the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is no little child who cannot say it, and when a mother first teaches her children to pray she always adds to the "Our Father," "Hail! Mary."

The whole prayer may be described as a tribute of love. Who, therefore, has composed it? The first part was spoken by the Archangel Gabriel, and the second part was added by the Holy Catholic Church.

Let us consider the occasion, the circumstances, and the time at which the angelical salutation was given to Christians.

Mary was at Nazareth, and was praying one day in a little grotto

which formed part of the humble home of Joseph, her espoused husband. It was the 25th of March. Suddenly Mary saw before her an Angel surrounded with light. "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," said this messenger from God; "blessed art thou among women." And as the Blessed Virgin was troubled at this salutation, and wondered what it could mean, the Archangel added, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus" (that is to say, Saviour). "He shall be called the Son of the Most High, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." And then Mary answered the Angel, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" (The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had both made a vow of perpetual virginity.) But the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God, because no word shall be impossible with God." Then Mary answered "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word," and the angel disappeared. Thus the Immaculate Virgin became the Mother of God. And nine months after, on the 25th of December, in the stable at Bethlehem, she brought miraculously into the world Jesus, her Divine Son. If the first part of the Hail Mary came from heaven, so surely did the last; for it is in the name and by the power of God that the Catholic Church speaks unto men; and it was the Church, inspired by the Holy Ghost, who in the year 541 commanded that this simple and beautiful prayer should be added to the angelical salutation: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

The circumstances which occasioned this addition to be made were these: An archbishop of Constantinople named Nestorius having dared both in preaching and in writing to attack the divine maternity of the Blessed Virgin, many of the orthodox bishops appealed to the Pope, St. Celestine, and what his judgment was we may easily suppose. At first he tried with great forbearance to lead the heretic Nestorius back to the truth, by clearly demonstrating that, the divine nature and the human nature being united in Jesus Christ in one only Person, who was both God and man, and thus inseparably and at the same time the Son of God and the Son of Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ must be truly and necessarily the Mother of God. Nestorius was entirely indifferent to these efforts of the Pope, and he was therefore obliged to have recourse to more rigorous measures.

He condemned Nestorius as a heretic and an abettor of heresy; he excommunicated him, degraded him from his ecclesiastical dignities, and convoked a general council of bishops to judge the guilty man. This council met at Ephesus in the year 451. The solemn assemblies were held in the ancient church of St. Mary, the first, it is said, ever erected to the honor of the Virgin Mother. Nothing could be more solemn than the meeting at which the Fathers judged Nestorius. From the dawn of day they consulted, the doors of the church being closed. An immense crowd collected outside. The night came, and the doors were still unopened. . . . At last the meeting ended; the bishops appeared upon the steps of the portico, three Papal legates at their head. One of them, St. Cyril of Alexandria, read and proclaimed the sentence in the midst of an unbroken silence: "Mary is truly the Mother of God. Whoever says otherwise is a heretic and excommunicated. Anathema to Nestorius!" Exclamations of joy rose upon all sides.

The bishops were led home in triumph, incense was burned, and the whole city was brilliantly illuminated. In remembrance of this great decision the Council of Ephesus commanded that the words "Holy Mary, Mother of God," etc., should be added to the angelical salutation.

Thus, for one blasphemy against the Blessed Virgin, innumerable praises have gone up to heaven during fourteen centuries, and God wonderfully brought good out of evil to the glory of His holy Name!

Nestorius, excommunicated and degraded like Judas from his episcopate, went into a desert to die, cursed by God and men. He died impenitent, and even while he lived, upon that sacrilegious tongue which had blasphemed the Mother of God a special curse descended in a very marked and terrible way.

Such is the origin of the Ave Maria. But in order that we may be moved to love this prayer, to say it often and attentively and with an ever-increasing fervor, let us reverently consider the words.

The salutation, *Ave*, is both an exclamation of love and a mark of reverence toward the Blessed Virgin; we should therefore say "Hail!" with love and confidence, because Mary is our good and tender Mother, the Refuge and Advocate of sinners, the Mother of mercy; and with the deepest veneration, because she is the most holy Queen of heaven and earth, and the glorious Mother of God.

In Hebrew the name of Mary signifies queen; it also signifies sea of bitterness and illuminatrix. The Blessed Virgin is indeed the Queen of angels, of saints, and of men; on Calvary she endured the

most bitter sorrow; and, lastly, she has given to the world Jesus Christ, the light of truth and holiness.

The Angel Gabriel did not pronounce the name of Mary, out of reverence for her who was to become the Mother of God. The church has added it, first, out of love for this sweet name; and, next, to show more clearly that the title "full of grace" could only be given to Mary. The words in the original are still more expressive than in the translation. They signify formed in grace; made, or innate with grace. Mary is perfectly and entirely in the grace of God, and without any stain of original or actual sin by the effects of which grace is destroyed. It is to this singular privilege of complete and perfect sanctity that she owes the title of Immaculate.

"The Lord is with thee." These words are given by God as a proof of the perfect union of the Creator with His creature. God the Father is with Mary as the bridegroom with his well-beloved spouse; God the Son is with her as a son is with his mother; God the Holy Ghost is with her as a king, in his palace, as a master in his own domains, as God in His own temple, as the soul is in the body and with the body.

"The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." These words of the Archangel were also spoken to Mary by St. Elizabeth on the day of the Visitation. Mary is the one woman above all other women, and it was she of whom God spoke to Adam and Eve when, in promising a Saviour, He said that He would make a complete separation between the devil and her. Mary is the woman, expected for four thousand years, who was predestined to the ineffable glory of giving its divine Redeemer to the human race.

St. Elizabeth added, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb." And the Church has added here the name of Jesus, so that there should be found in this prayer the three great names, God, Jesus, Mary: God, the Creator and Lord of all, and our own last end; Jesus, God made man, the Saviour of the world; Mary, the bond of union between heaven and earth.

He is blessed, the divine Son of Mary, for God has poured forth on Him without measure all grace and benediction; and not only is He blessed in Himself, but in Him all the nations of the earth are eternally blessed; He is for all the source of life and benediction, and there can be no blessing but through Him.

Holy Mary! Holy, indeed, and more than holy; for the Church bestows on her an honor far higher than that which is rendered to the Saints. She does not adore Mary; that would be a sacrilegious

idolatry; God alone, Jesus alone, may be adored. But the Blessed Virgin merits and receives from the Church a special worship, peculiar to herself, called hyperdulia, which means honor above all honor. Above Mary there is only Jesus Christ, only God. Below her, at an immense distance, are seraphim, cherubim, archangels, angels, and all the saints.

Mother of God! What a title, what glory! How great the power over the Sacred Heart of Jesus which His own Mother must possess! How good it is to ask her prayers! "A single look from her," said the great St. Bernard, "disarms the wrath of divine justice; and when she pleads in our favor the graces of the Almighty flow downward like a mighty river." Let us therefore say with perfect confidence, "O Mother of God, and our Mother, turn thine eyes of mercy toward us. Pray for us sinners! We do not deserve to be heard by our Father who is in heaven, but thou, His holy, His well-beloved Mother, thou wilt be heard; and the title we give thee most dear to thy heart is, "Refuge of Sinners."

Holy Mother, pray for us now, during the whole of our life on earth; pray for us at the moment of temptation. Obtain for us purity, humility, meekness, a lively faith, and final perseverance. Defend us from the devil, our enemy; guard us from sin to-day, to-morrow, at every instant of our life, and especially at the hour of our death. Amen. That is the decisive moment. It is upon that last hour that our whole eternity depends; it is then that we shall need especially the help of the Blessed Mother of God. Let us have confidence; she will not fail us then. At that supreme moment Mary will come to us if, during life, we have been faithful in asking her help. "Behold me, my child," she will say, "I am with thee; thou hast called me. How often hast thou said to me, Hail! full of grace. And now, my child, I greet thee, full of the grace of my divine Son, who is about to reward thee with eternal glory. Thou hast said to me, The Lord is with thee; He is with thee also, O my child! and thou shalt be with Him throughout the blissful ages of eternity. Thou hast blessed me, and hast blessed the Name of Jesus my Son; and I have blessed thee, and have accompanied thee all through life with constant benedictions; I have obtained for thee the grace of a happy death, and at this terrible moment I bless thee yet again. Have confidence, thy Mother is with thee; thou hast made me thy advocate and thy refuge. Poor sinner! thou hast done well to seek in my bosom an asylum against the justice of thy God! He has appointed me the Mother of mercy, and I have obtained mercy for

thee. Come, therefore, soul beloved of my Son, even now is that last hour of which thou hast spoken every time that thou hast prayed to me; I change for thee its terrors into a calm, sweet hope. Child of Mary, child of God, enter into the joy of thy Lord!"

Such is the Ave Maria. Happy he who hallows with this sweet prayer every action of his life! in this world he shall receive consolation, and in the next an eternal reward.

THE CREDO.

AFTER the Pater and the Ave Maria, the Credo presents itself to all the children of the Church, as a necessary part of their morning and evening prayers. Repeated with devotion, it is the best and most solemn of all the acts of faith. The Ave Maria is the sweetest and most consoling of all the acts of hope; the Pater is the holiest and most sublime of all the acts of charity.

It is not sufficient to know these three prayers in English and to understand them perfectly, but it is also very necessary to be able to say them in Latin—the language in which the Church recites them every day throughout the whole world. In Catholic countries little children of six years old always say the Credo, as well as the Our Father, and the Hail Mary, in Latin. We can pray much better in Latin than in the vulgar tongue, since a special grace always accompanies the language of the Church. I will add that it is not difficult to learn these prayers in Latin; it can be done simply by reading them from a prayer-book for three or four weeks at your morning and evening prayers. Latin is the language of the Church because in the time of St. Peter and the Apostles it was the language of the whole world. The Church has preserved it from the beginning out of respect for the apostolical traditions. The Creed—composed by the Apostles before their separation, about twelve years after the Passion and Resurrection of Our Lord—briefly recalls the great mysteries of Christianity. And, first, it places before Christians the obligation they are under to believe, that is, to submit to the teaching of the Church, which is infallible, because it is the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. To believe is to accept without doubting all that is taught by the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church. Then the Creed recalls the mystery of the existence of one only God—ineffable and supreme; a pure Spirit, eternal and infinite in all perfections—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Creator of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, of the visible and invisible worlds. It briefly states the

great fundamental mystery of religion, and recalls how Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God—God Himself even as the Father is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, the true Son of God, and the true Son of Mary—became incarnate by the greatest of all miracles and by the power of the Holy Ghost, and thus united the divine nature and the human nature in one indivisible Person. It recalls that the Son of God desired to suffer and die to expiate the sins of men, and to satisfy in His innocent Person the justice of His Heavenly Father; that He died to give us life; that He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to prove His divinity; and that He will come again at the end of the world to judge all men, the evil and the good, the living and the dead. Then the Creed goes on to teach that the Holy Ghost has been sent by Jesus Christ to His Church, and assists and directs it in all things. In the Church and through the Church the Holy Spirit unites into one family all the Saints of heaven, of earth, and purgatory. He fights against sin, and saves repentant sinners by means of baptism and the other sacraments; He prepares us for the resurrection of the body, which shall take place on the day of the last judgment; and lastly, in the Name of Jesus Christ, and through the infinite love of the Father, He plants in the souls of the faithful the germ of the life everlasting.

Such is the Credo, the apostolic summary of the Christian faith. Such is the great and holy prayer which from the time of the Apostles has re-echoed throughout the earth, in one harmonious cry of salvation, adoration, faith, and love. Let this divine cry be often on our lips and in our hearts. It will strengthen the faith to which it gives so clear and unfaltering an utterance, and faith is the very foundation of the Christian life and of eternal salvation.

THE CONFITEOR.

If the Christian after his baptism became impeccable he would only need to worship God by faith and hope and love; but, unfortunately, in the midst of the temptations and combats of life he preserves the sad possibility of sin, and, being tempted, often falls. Therefore it is not only right but absolutely necessary that he should daily make an act of contrition, united to the acts of faith, hope, and charity; that is to say, that he should humiliate himself for his sins, and speak sorrowful words of repentance to the God whom he has offended. And this is why we must always add the beautiful act of contrition expressed by the Confiteor to the acts of faith,

hope, and love expressed in our daily prayers by the Pater, Ave, and Credo.

The Confiteor is the fourth great Catholic prayer which the Church obliges her ministers to recite every day both in the Mass and in the Divine Office, and the value of which she urges upon all her children. Nothing could be more simple, more consoling, more sublime, than this prayer of Christian repentance. "I confess" means I acknowledge; indeed the first condition, and also the first sign, of true repentance is the sincere acknowledgment of sin committed. If there is no acknowledgment, there is no humility; if there is no humility, there is no repentance; if there is no repentance, there is no pardon; and we might add, if there is no pardon, there is no salvation; for we are all, without any exception, sinners, and the holiest Saints (the Blessed Virgin alone excepted) are only sinners pardoned and purified.

It is to Almighty God that we must first of all confess our misery; for it is He whom we have offended by sin. He is God, that is, infinite goodness and infinite holiness; He is Almighty in His goodness; therefore if we repent with our whole hearts, we have reason to hope everything from His fatherly compassion.

We do not say, "I confess to my Saviour Jesus Christ," for a very deep and consoling reason. It is because Jesus Christ Himself, the Victim of our sins, asks forgiveness with us, for us, and in us from God His Father and our Father. Our repentance only reaches God and obtains pardon when it is united to the sorrow and the suffering of the Sacred Heart for sin. Jesus is within us, praying with us, obtaining mercy for us, and giving to our prayer and our repentance the merits of His Passion and of His own all-powerful prayers. In reciting the Confiteor, and at all times when asking God to forgive our sins, we must unite ourselves closely to our dear Lord, who, though He knew no sin, made Himself sin for us, and bore our sins in His own body upon the tree, that we all might gain access to God.

"I confess . . . to Blessed Mary ever Virgin." We confess our sins to the Blessed Virgin because she is the Refuge of sinners, the Health of the weak, the Gate of heaven, the Mother of mercy, the Advocate and Help of Christians. The gentle, loving Virgin Mother pities poor sinners as a mother pities her sick child; she prays for them, and her powerful prayer obtains for them at all times, but in our own days more especially, miraculous graces, innumerable graces of pardon and repentance.

We also ask St. Michael the Archangel to help us and pray for us,

because he is the great conqueror of Satan and the glorious champion of the heavenly hosts. St. Michael can powerfully help us to overcome the sin which is in us, since it is the work of his adversary, and if unconquered will drag us down when life is ended to the depths of hell, and there unite us forever to the devils whose rebellion we have shared. For what is a devil but a sinner, a lost and impenitent sinner?

And next we confess our sins, our falls, our lamentable weakness to St. John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and lastly to all the Saints, because all the Saints, and especially St. John the Baptist and St. Peter and St. Paul, can assist us and obtain for us the pardon we desire. St. John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus Christ, will prepare in our hearts the way of the Lord. St. Peter, who holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven, will obtain for us the grace of being loosed from our sins. St. Paul, the great Apostle of Jesus, will save us by his prayers, as he formerly saved the sinning Gentile nations by the zeal of his preaching and by the blood of his martyrdom.

When we confess our sins at the tribunal of penance, at the feet of the priest who is the depositary of the keys of the Church and of the divine pardon, we add "and to you, father." The priest by pardoning our sins in the name of God restores life to our soul, and thus becomes truly our spiritual father. For what is a father but the instrument ordained by the all-powerful goodness of God to give life to a creature? The Church is our true mother by baptism and the other sacraments; her minister, the Catholic priest, is our true spiritual father, the true father of our souls. Absolution is a resurrection as real as that of Lazarus. In the Sacrament of Penance we are obliged to confess our sins in detail to the priest, because Our Lord has willed it so. He only pardons us on this condition, as we fully explained when speaking of Confession.

What do we confess to God, to the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints? That we "have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed." These three accusations comprehend all the sins a man can commit in this world. We add, striking the breast three times as a sign of penitence, "through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault." The Church thus impresses upon us that we must not seek to excuse our sins by any vain pleas, but must fully recognize them, and must humiliate ourselves willingly and with our whole hearts. And then we ask the Blessed Virgin and the Saints (and in confession the priest) to pray to the Lord our God for us.

Pardon follows the humble confession of our sins, and the Church, who knows the loving mercy of God, teaches us to say, "May Almighty God have mercy on us, and forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life! May the almighty and merciful God grant us pardon, absolution, and remission of our sins! Amen."

Every Christian should know the Confiteor in Latin as well as in English. When he commits any sin he may recite it with much fruit, and he should never omit it from his morning and evening prayers.

THE ROSARY.

It was an ancient custom in the East to offer crowns of roses to distinguished persons, and the early Christians loved to honor in this way the images of the Blessed Virgin and the relics of the martyrs.

An illustrious bishop, St. Gregory of Naziazum, full of devotion toward the Mother of God, was inspired to substitute for the material crown of roses a spiritual crown of prayers, persuaded that it would be more acceptable to the Blessed Queen of the Church. With this idea he composed a long series or crown of prayers, which comprehended the most glorious titles, the sweetest praises, and the most excellent prerogatives of Mary. In the seventh century St. Bridget, one of the patron Saints of Ireland, brought this pious thought to a greater perfection. She made the devotion introduced by St. Gregory available to all by substituting for the beautiful prayers he had composed the most popular and still more beautiful prayers of the Creed, the Our Father, and the Hail Mary. And in order to know by some material indication how many prayers had been recited, she adopted the custom of the Anchorites of Thebaid, and threaded beads of wood or stone in the form of a crown. Rosary signifies crown of roses; and the prayers we daily recite form a wreath of spiritual roses with which in love we crown our Mother and our Queen.

The word chaplet means little crown. The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin is composed of five decades, each of which consists of ten Hail Marys, preceded by one Our Father. St. Dominic, one of the greatest Saints of Christianity, and one of the most devoted servants of the Blessed Virgin, was specially instructed in this devotion by the Mother of God herself.

In saying the Rosary we repeat the Hail Mary more often than the Our Father, not, as has been said, because we honor the Blessed Virgin more than God, but because, being a devotion instituted in her honor, it is quite natural that the prayers it contains should be

specially addressed to her. Everything in its time we might answer. The Rosary is not, as some unusually enlightened minds conceive, a devotion good for women. First, I do not see in what men so greatly surpass women, either as regards the intellect, or, still more, as regards the heart. In many cases women are superior to men. And so the saying, "Good for women!" is worth nothing. And what is there in the chaplet that is not good for every one? Is it the Our Father which is not good enough for men? Was not Our Lord speaking to His own Apostles when He taught them this beautiful prayer? Or is it the Hail Mary which is beneath the mind of men? or the Creed at the beginning? or is it the sign of the Cross?

The greatest men of modern times have recited the Rosary with as much devotion as the simple women whom some, with remarkably advanced understandings, appear to disdain. St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent de Paul, Bossuet, and Fénelon are among the great number of those who have offered to the Blessed Virgin this daily tribute of praise. St. Francis de Sales made a vow to recite the Rosary every day. It must be a strange kind of pride which can despise a prayer so honored by such men as these.

The principal mysteries of our redemption, fifteen in number, are celebrated in this devotion; and the right way in which to recite the Rosary is to meditate during each decade on one of the mysteries in the life of Our Saviour, or His Holy Mother, and to ask God through the intercession of Mary for some virtue which we need, or which shines out more especially in the mystery we contemplate; or we may recite each decade for a special intention, to obtain some grace from God, the conversion of a friend, of a father, a mother, a child, for the cure of some disease, the success of some undertaking, or, in case of failure, for patience and resignation.

A faithful daily recitation of the Rosary is sure to prove a great source of happiness.

A preacher of the last century was one day called in to hear the confession of a young man who had been seized by apoplexy. He found him quite unconscious, and left in order to offer up for the dying man a votive mass of the Blessed Virgin. He had scarcely ended when a servant came to tell him that his master was able to speak. What was the surprise of the priest when, on reaching his new penitent, he found him penetrated with feelings of the deepest repentance, and offering his life to God in expiation for his sins! Profiting by these happy dispositions, he received his confession and

administered the last sacraments. Not knowing to what his conversion was to be attributed, he questioned him as to the cause. "Father," he answered, "I can only attribute this grace to the fervor of your prayers and to those of my dear mother. When she was dying, she called me, and, speaking to me of the dangers by which my youth would be surrounded, she said, 'My only consolation, my son, is that I leave you under the protection of the Blessed Virgin; promise me to say the Rosary every day.' I promised, and I acknowledge that for ten years this has been the only religious act which I have practised." On hearing this the confessor recognized the visible protection of the Blessed Virgin, which was clearly manifested in this most consoling death-bed, nor ceased until the sick man had breathed his last sigh.

THE MASS.

Of all the points of Christian doctrine there is perhaps not one which it is more necessary to know, yet of which many are more ignorant, than that of which we must now speak. The practice of it is so frequent, and the fruits to be drawn from it are, if rightly appreciated, so abundant, that it may be called the soul of Christianity, the centre and abridgement of the Christian faith.

I mean the Mass.

The Mass is not a prayer like other prayers. Some think that vespers or some other devotion may well fill the place of Mass, but this is a great error; the service of vespers forms a very excellent religious exercise, but vespers are only prayers. The Mass is indeed a prayer, but it is something higher still; it is a sacrifice, and what a sacrifice! A sacrifice in which God renders Himself present to His people! A sacrifice in which God Himself descends upon the altar as the victim!

A sacrifice is the most holy act in the worship of the one true God; it is an offering made to God of the life of a victim, as an acknowledgment that He is the sovereign Lord of every creature He has made. The more excellent the victim the more acceptable the sacrifice, since it draws its value from the victim which is immolated.

Let us judge from this the infinite holiness of the sacrifice of the Cross, in which Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of the living God, the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity made man, offered His own life to God His Father, to render Him a homage that is worthy of Him, that is to say, infinite, and to atone by an expiation equally

infinite for the sins of the whole world. Can anything greater or more perfect be conceived? And this infinite greatness, and infinite perfection, are to be found in the holy sacrifice of the Mass; for it is the same divine sacrifice of Jesus Christ continuously offered throughout all ages.

Truly present, though invisible, in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, Jesus Christ by His Almighty power changes the bread and wine beneath the hands of His priests into His own body and blood; and there on the altar, at the sacred moment of the consecration, He offers Himself anew as the one universal all-sufficient Victim in the presence of God His Father; He renews the act of voluntary oblation which gave to His Passion and death upon the Cross all their infinite value; and thus immolating Himself anew, though without the shedding of His precious blood, He renders present to all human generations the one sacrifice which saved the world.

Therefore, the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are not two sacrifices, but one only sacrifice, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ Himself offered simply under two different forms. On the cross and on the altar the Victim is the same, Jesus Christ; and this one Victim offers Himself to the same God with the same intentions. The appearance, the outward form alone, is distinct. The most solemn moment of the Mass is, therefore, the moment of the consecration or elevation.

The bell is rung that all may be aware of the presence of Our Lord. Every one must be kneeling, with bowed head, to adore in deepest reverence the majesty of Jesus Christ, and in union with Him to render all the praise, love, adoration, and thanksgiving which God expects from His creatures. We must also ask pardon for our sins, and make known our spiritual and temporal needs, uniting ourselves to this most holy Victim, for whose sake alone God deigns to hear our prayers.

It would be a great irreverence to remain seated or standing (without necessity) during the elevation; or, still more, to speak or laugh or look about; even the least noise must be avoided during these precious instants. Anything approaching to indifference at this solemn moment would show a sad want of religion. If we had a lively faith, we should be wholly penetrated and absorbed in the presence of the God who loves us to such a marvellous excess. All in the Mass which precedes the consecration is only the preparation for the sacred moment of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and all which follows is only the completion and the act of thanksgiving.

Nothing could be more solemn than all of these ceremonies. The greater part come down to us from the earliest ages.

In the first and second centuries, the sacred mysteries commenced, as now, by the singing of psalms and by prayers, which the priest recited aloud, and to which the faithful answered Amen. On the altar, which was usually raised above the relics of some martyr, were placed candles or lighted lamps. Incense was burned. The priest turned to the faithful then, as now, with the *Dominus vobiscum*. Then they read the letters (or epistles) of the Apostles or some passage by the Prophets of the Old Testament. Every one stood during the reading of the Gospel, which the priest or celebrant bishop explained in a homily or exhortation. After this the Credo was recited, and next the bread, wine, wax, and oil necessary for the sacrifice and worship were offered to the priest. Before the consecration of the Host and of the Chalice, the priest sang the prayer called the Preface (viz., the prayer which precedes); and a little after the consecration the Pater, absolutely the same as in our own days. Before Communion the kiss of peace was given; then followed a thanksgiving; the priest gave the benediction with the sign of the Cross, and the communicants retired from the altar bearing in their hearts their Lord and their God. It is a great mistake to pretend that the Mass is a modern institution. It was Our Lord Himself who first offered the sacrifice of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday at the Last Supper, when His Passion was about to begin. And from that time apostles, bishops, and priests have said Mass everywhere and always.

Christians are obliged to hear Mass on Sundays and Feasts of obligation, and no one who is able to do so on the week-days should fail to fulfil this most important duty. No other religious practice can be compared to this. How many might find time to go each morning to receive the benediction of Jesus Christ, and yet deprive themselves, from negligence, of graces which would render the day that followed holy and happy, and would sanctify their lives!

THE CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH.

In all times religion has made use of outward ceremonies through which to express by visible signs those sentiments of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise which spring up beneath her holy influence in the heart of man brought face to face with his Creator.

When these feelings cease to be concentrated in the depths of the heart, when they find outward utterance and become visible to the

eyes of men, they are subjected to certain forms or ceremonies which constitute the public worship of the children of God.

We may say that religious ceremonials, considered in their widest sense, have not only come down to us from the time of the Apostles, but from the very cradle of the human race.

We read in the Sacred Writings that God, after creation, blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; that is to say, that He set it exclusively apart for His own worship, teaching to Adam, our first father, who was by adoption the child of God, the manner in which this day must be employed. This primitive form of divine worship, outwardly rendered to the Lord, was gradually developed, by the command of God Himself, into the Jewish religion; and Moses, the great prophet of the ancient law, received upon Mount Sinai, in the midst of thunder and lightning, those ceremonial laws which he transmitted to the people of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, having come into the world to teach men to adore God in spirit and in truth, did not for that reason suppress the outward ceremonies of the ancient law. He not only preserved many, but He also instituted new ones, and He left the Holy Spirit to His Church in order that His divine work might be preserved and developed throughout succeeding ages.

And thus from the very origin of Christianity we see the Apostles making their regulations with regard to divine worship, celebrating religious assemblies, consecrating certain edifices for Christian meetings, celebrating the sacrifice of the Mass, etc., and St. Paul reminds the faithful of Corinth that he received from Jesus Christ Himself all that he prescribes to them touching the sacrifice and the Communion of the Holy Eucharist.

The Apostles, who remained together at Jerusalem for many years after the resurrection and ascension of Our Lord, celebrated together the divine offices, and gave themselves "continually to prayer and the ministry of the word," as St. Luke relates in the Acts of the Apostles. After their dispersion into different parts of the world for the preaching of the Gospel, they initiated the Christian societies, which they formed in different nations, in the same true faith, the same Christian morality, and the same divine worship.

Thus, notwithstanding the difference of languages and customs, we find, throughout the whole Catholic world, that all sacred ceremonies are everywhere substantially the same. And in the Holy Sacrifice, which is the centre of Christian worship, we see all the most important parts unchanged—viz., the sign of the Cross, the

recitation or singing of the Psalms, the reading of the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, principally from the holy Gospels; the instruction or sermon which followed on Sundays and Feast-days; the offering of bread and wine, the elements of the Eucharist; the Preface or preparation for the solemn moment of consecration; the consecration of the Holy Eucharist, by the bishop or priest, by means of the words spoken by Our Lord at the Last Supper. And, both before and after, the prayer for the living and the dead; the Lord's Prayer, followed by the kiss of peace; the Communion; the thanksgiving; the benediction of the priest; the use of certain vestments, and the observance of certain rites,—in one word, the foundation is everywhere the same and the differences are most trifling. The origin of these differences may be easily explained by the necessity the Apostles and their first successors found of conforming to the different habits and customs of various nationalities, and thus propagating the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And next came the modifications brought about by time, and authorized by the authority of the Pontiffs, to whom Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promised His assistance, even unto the end of the world, and whom He charged with the direction of all that relates to the preservation of the faith, the maintenance of Christian morality, and the majesty of divine worship.

The ceremonies and ancient formulas of prayers, many of which come down from apostolic times and from the first ages of the Church, are preserved in certain books, the integrity of which is guarded by the popes and bishops, and which are called the Missal, the Ritual or Sacramentary, the Breviary, and the Ceremonial.

In the chapters which follow we propose to explain briefly the principal religious ceremonies of the Church, and shall speak particularly of the churches, the ceremonies of the Mass, the vestments, and sacred vessels, and, lastly, of the evening services, such as Vespers, Compline, and Benediction. We shall see by this simple explanation how ill-founded are the prejudices which exist against the Catholic faith, which necessarily appears the more holy, the more perfect, and the more worthy of God and men in proportion as it becomes more clearly understood. "A little knowledge drives away religion," said the celebrated English philosopher, Lord Bacon, "and a true and profound knowledge restores faith and confirms the Christian."

THE CHURCHES.

WE have seen the importance and necessity of an outward ceremonial in divine worship. We have seen that since man is not a pure spirit, but has a body as well as a soul, it is quite natural that religion should strive to enlist both in the service of the one true God, and by means of the senses of the body should plant within the soul the sentiments of faith, reverence, and religious adoration which strengthen and build up the Christian life and character.

Those religious sects which almost entirely reject the use of sacred ceremonies prove by this fact alone that their religion does not come from Him who has made us what we are, and thus, under pretext of improving and reforming the Catholic faith, they have deformed everything and have ruined many souls. But, in order that the true object of religious ceremonies should be fulfilled, it is necessary that they should be understood. We shall, therefore, commence by a general explanation of churches and sacred things, and shall afterward explain more minutely the ceremonies of the Mass, of Vespers, Benediction, etc.

By the word church two very distinct things are understood: 1. The union of all the faithful who serve God, and form upon earth the great and holy family of Our Father in heaven; and in this sense the word means a society, and not a house of prayer. 2. We call by the name of church the building in which Christians gather together for the worship of God, the house in which they meet thus taking the name of those who meet there. Our churches are consecrated, blessed, and are expressly forbidden to be used for anything but divine worship. They represent in a striking manner the living Church of which we have spoken. The stones of which they are built signify the immense number of Christians whose perfect union forms the Catholic Church, and the pillars or columns which sustain the edifice are an image of the bishops and pastors charged to sustain and uphold the spiritual edifice of the faith. And even as the walls and columns all rest upon the pavement of the temple, upon the basis, upon the foundation, the faithful and the bishops all rest upon the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the chief and sole foundation of the holy Church of God. The basis of our churches, therefore, represents the Sovereign Pontiff, upon whom everything within the Church rests: faith, doctrine, discipline, etc.

In the second place, even as the Church is composed of the Saints,

who are already in heaven, of Christians still fighting upon earth, and of the holy souls who are awaiting their deliverance in purgatory; so the material churches are composed of the choir, where we may see in the priests (as we shall presently explain) a figure of the Saints and Angels; of the nave, filled by the faithful servants and soldiers of Jesus Christ; and lastly of the churchyards, where the bodies of departed Christians repose, and which should be, in accordance with the true spirit of the liturgy, under the pavement of the temples, or at least within the shadow of their walls.

There exists one other striking resemblance between the living Church and the buildings in which we worship God. For even as in the first Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, is the centre and principle of all the glory of the Saints and Angels in heaven, of the holiness of Christians upon earth, of the hope of the souls in purgatory; so in our churches all Catholic worship and Catholic devotion centres round the Blessed Sacrament, where the same Jesus ever dwells, present in His own divine Person on our altars, to be the one sacred object of our adoration and our Mediator with God.

Churches are usually surmounted by a high spire, at the summit of which shines the Cross, the holy symbol of Christianity. Sometimes we see the image of a cock, signifying the vigilance with which God should be served. In the steeple are the bells which, with their soft chimes, summon the faithful to prayer. For fourteen centuries bells have been used in the Christian Church. This custom was established by St. Paulinus, a holy bishop of Nole in Italy. Until that time Christians had been summoned to their meetings by less convenient and less efficacious means, such as trumpets, rattles, and even the human voice.

It is said that bells are baptized, but that means simply blessed, so as to set them apart for their holy use.

We might give many more interesting details with regard to the form and exterior of our churches, but we only desire to call the attention of the reader to the most essential points.

THE ALTARS AND SACRED VESSELS.

THE holiest part of the church is the altar, where the sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated. The altar is so called from the Latin word *altus*, high, because it ought to be raised by three steps, or at least by one, above the pavement of the church. This elevation of the altars signifies the holiness of the sacrifices and prayers which,

offered by the priest in the name of the people, ascend from thence to heaven. There ought always to be a crucifix and several candles upon the altar, and beneath it are the relics, placed there by the bishops when it is consecrated. It is covered with three white cloths, without which it is forbidden to celebrate the Mass.

Altars are principally intended for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, and for all that in any way relates to the Blessed Sacrament of the adorable Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

The three white cloths signify the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, at the same time inseparable and distinct. It is forbidden, because of the holiness of the altars, to place anything upon them not necessary for the celebration of the Mass.

The crucifix, always placed in the middle of the altar, and without which Mass may not be said, is intended to remind the priest and the faithful that the sacrifice of the Mass is the same as that of the Cross, in which Jesus Christ so loved the world as to give His life a redemption for many. On each side of the crucifix wax candles must be lighted, two when a priest not a bishop says Mass, but four when it is a bishop. These candles signify Jesus Christ, the true Light of the world, to which He gives both life and light by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The lamp, which burns night and day before the Blessed Sacrament, is a symbol of the same mystery. In the great churches of Rome there are seven lamps before the tabernacle instead of one, symbolizing the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which Jesus Christ is the first principle.

In the worship of the Holy Eucharist the Church uses, principally, three different kinds of sacred vessels—the ciborium, in which the Blessed Sacrament is preserved, and which remains in the tabernacle; the chalice, which is used to celebrate the Mass; and, lastly, the monstrance, in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for solemn benedictions and processions.

It is needless to remark on the sanctity of these sacred vessels, especially of the chalice. In all times, even during the cruel persecutions of the earliest ages of the Church, Christians have most religiously provided for their costliness and magnificence. They were often made of gold or massive silver, richly chased, and set with precious stones. We still try to render them as worthy as possible of that hallowed purpose for which they are intended, and the part of these vessels which touches the Blessed Sacrament must always be covered with gold. Gold, from its excellence, is the sym-

bol of charity; and silver, from its whiteness, is the symbol of innocence and purity.

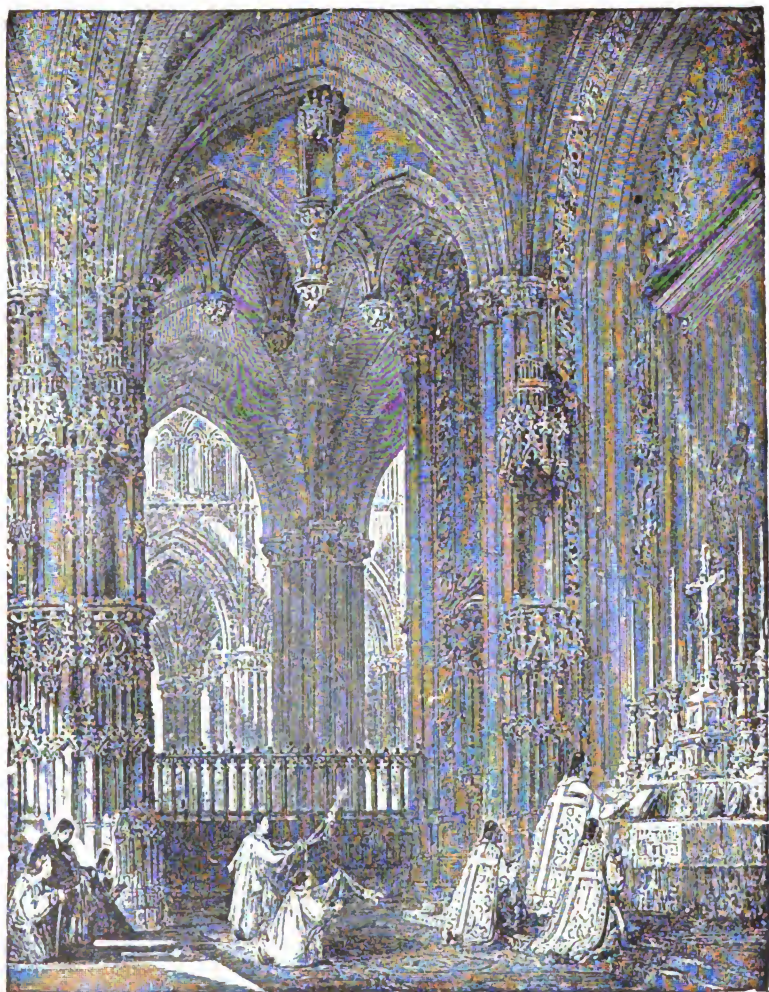
Besides the three altar cloths of which we have spoken, and which a bishop only has the right to bless, many other sacred linen cloths are used for the celebration of the Mass. The most worthy of veneration is the corporal, so called from the Latin *corpus*, because the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ rests immediately upon it during the Holy Sacrifice. In the tabernacle there is always a corporal under the ciborium, and also under the monstrance in Benediction. The linen cloth placed over the chalice, and intended to wipe it and to purify it, is called a purificator. Only ecclesiastics are permitted to touch these sacred vessels and corporals, because of the reverence which must be paid to everything connected with the Holy Eucharist.

EXPLANATION OF THE CEREMONIES OF THE MASS.

THE SACRED VESTMENTS.

In the early ages of Christianity bishops and priests, when celebrating divine worship, did not wear vestments of a different shape from the dress which was commonly worn. But it is certain that even in the time of the Apostles very rich materials, often embroidered in gold and silver, were worn at the altar in order to add to the majesty of the sacred mysteries.

When the Church, after the persecutions were over, counted among her children the Roman emperors, and the great and noble of the earth, she surrounded the worship of God with a splendor until then unknown; and her ministers, out of reverence for the Holy Sacrifice, were vested for the altar in magnificent robes of gold, of silver, and of silk. The shape of these antique vestments has been preserved up to the present time, with the exception of some trifling alterations. Formerly they consisted principally of a long white robe, with a stole or band of purple worn round the neck, and falling in front to the feet; of a large rich vestment over the white robe, called a chasuble; and, lastly, of a golden circlet round the head. To these vestments the Church has added, during the centuries, the girdle which draws in the folds of the white robe called an alb, and the maniple, or embroidered band, which the priest wears on the left arm during the celebration of the Mass; for bishops the golden circlet has been replaced by the mitre, which represents the divine royalty of Jesus Christ.



THE CELEBRATION OF HIGH MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF ST LOUIS,
IN LYONS CATHEDRAL.



ORIGIN OF THE OFFICE AND MASS OF CORPUS CHRISTI—ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SUBMITTING THE ORIGINAL TO POPE URBAN IV.

From the beginning up to the fifth or sixth century all the vestments were white. White was worn by the Roman nobility, and has always been regarded as a perfect symbol of holiness and innocence. But for the last six or seven hundred years a diversity of colors has been generally established, white, red, green, violet, and black, which we still see used in the liturgy. The Church desires thus to represent, as far as possible, the mysteries which she honors.

The ancient usage of white vestments is now reserved for the feasts of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and of Saints not martyrs. Red vestments are used for the feasts of martyrs who have gained heaven by shedding their blood for Jesus Christ; they are also worn in the Masses of the Holy Ghost, because He manifested Himself on the day of Pentecost under the form of tongues of fire; and also to celebrate the memory of the Sacred Passion of Our Lord and the shedding of His precious blood. Green, which is little used, is the symbol of hope. Lastly, violet and black, colors of sadness and emblems of mortification, are used in all penitential seasons, principally in Advent and Lent. The vestments must be blessed by a bishop or by a priest who has been duly authorized.

The long cassock—black for priests, violet for bishops, red for cardinals, and white for the Pope—is not a sacred habit, but simply a special garment intended to distinguish ecclesiastics from other men, and to remind them constantly that their lives should be far removed from the thoughtlessness and indifference of those who are in the world. The difference of colors marks the difference of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Over the cassock, priests, when exercising the functions of the holy ministry, wear a white garment with wide sleeves called a surplice. By its whiteness it signifies the sanctity of Jesus Christ, with which the priest should be clothed as with a garment; for he is the angel or messenger of the earth, sent by God to sanctify his brethren and point out to them the way to heaven.

The rochet is a short surplice with narrow sleeves reaching to the knees, worn only by bishops and prelates, and which may not take the place of the surplice in the administration of Sacraments and the offices of the Church.

In saying Mass a priest does not wear the surplice but the alb (Latin, *albus*), a long white robe, which represents the white garment with which Our Lord was vested by Herod. This is drawn in by a white cord, an ancient custom which signified among the Romans gravity and morality, purity and chastity. Upon the left

arm is worn the maniple (Latin, *manus*), which was originally a cloth intended for wiping, if required, the hands and face; it signifies patient endurance of the ills of life.

The fourth sacerdotal vestment is the stole (Latin, *stola*). Placed over the shoulders of the priest, it signifies the yoke of Jesus Christ, and crossed upon his breast it reminds him that, in order to bear this divine yoke aright, he must carry his cross day by day, must renounce the evil inclinations of nature, and die to the world, to the flesh, and to sin.

The girdle, maniple, and stole represent the cords and bands with which Our Lord was bound in the various stages of His Passion.

And, lastly, the priest is vested in the chasuble, which, by covering all the rest, represents the virtue of charity, and the perfection of sanctity which is required to offer worthily the Holy Sacrifice. A cross is embroidered both upon the back and in the front of the chasuble, in front to remind the priest that he must imitate Jesus Christ crucified; at the back, to recall this same obligation to the faithful who assist at the Mass; in the front, because the priest offers the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of his own sins; at the back, because he must also pray and do penance for the sins of his brethren. The chasuble also represents the purple garment with which Our Lord was clothed as a mock king, and the cross upon it calls to mind the cross He bore upon His sacred shoulders.

The cope is a species of mantle used for Benediction, processions, and other solemn functions. Formerly it was a capuchin (French, *capuce*), or large cloak with a hood, worn by ecclesiastics for religious ceremonies in the open air. It was a protection from the rain and dust. But for a long time the hood has no longer been used; it has changed its shape, and has become a simple vestment ornamented with fringe and embroidery.

Finally, the priest's tonsure, or crown, is to represent the crown of thorns which our Saviour wore.

CEREMONIES OF THE MASS.

FROM THE COMMENCEMENT TO THE EPISTLE.

THE MASS is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ Our Lord, offered, not upon Calvary with the shedding of His precious Blood, but by the ministry of His priests, under the appearances of bread and wine.

The sacrifice of the Mass and that of the Cross are not two sacri

fices, but one and the same sacrifice, of which the Victim is the same, and which the Son of God offers to His Father with the same intentions. Only the outward appearances are different, so that between the sacrifice of Calvary and that of the altar there is no essential difference.

The ceremonies of the Mass are acts of religion, and certain mysterious signs which the Church employs in the celebration of this adorable sacrifice to add to its solemnity, and to increase the fervor of the faithful.

The Mass consists of three principal parts—1. The preparation for the sacrifice; 2. the sacrifice properly so called; 3. the Communion and acts of thanksgiving.

The preparation begins with the sign of the Cross, which the priest makes on himself when reaching the altar at the foot of the steps, and it lasts until the consecration.

The sacrifice properly so called consists in the consecration of the bread and wine into the sacred Body and most precious Blood of Our Lord.

The third part includes the thanksgiving and prayers after the consecration until the last Gospel.

The preparation for the sacrifice may be again divided into four distinct parts—1. The prayers which the priest and the acolyte (who answers in the name of the congregation) recite at the foot of the altar, and at the altar itself until the Epistle; 2. the instructions and profession of faith contained in the Epistle, the Gospel, and the Creed; 3. the oblation and sanctification of the bread and wine intended to be consecrated; 4. lastly, the solemn invocation and the secret prayers of the Canon, which immediately precede the consecration of the Holy Eucharist.

The priest and the acolyte commence by making the sign of the Cross, thus showing that the action which they are about to perform is no other than the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Both kneeling or bowing down, represent by this attitude of humility the reverence due to the Majesty of God, and the humiliations of Jesus in the sacred mysteries of the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the Holy Eucharist. During these prayers, and especially during the Confiteor, both the priest and the faithful should excite in themselves a deep contrition for their sins, which have been the true cause of the sufferings and Passion of their Saviour. They should recall His sorrowful prayer in the Garden of Olives, when, prostrate on the ground, He asked pardon for sinners, and offered Himself to His

Father as the universal Victim of expiation. It is with such memories as these, and in union with Jesus, suffering and dying, that we should humiliate ourselves at the beginning of the Mass.

The priest goes up the steps to the altar as Jesus Christ, whom he represents, the Mediator between God and man; he commences by kissing the altar, asking God, through the merits of the Saints whose relics rest beneath it, to grant to all the pardon of their sins. The priest kisses the altar seven times during the Mass, and turns to the faithful seven times with the holy greeting, *Dominus Vobiscum!* ("The Lord be with you"). This mysterious number expresses the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which Jesus Christ is the only source, and which He communicates to the world by the merits of His sacrifice, and applies by the ministry of His priests.

Having gone up to the altar, the priest now goes to the left side (to the right of the spectator it is true, but to the left of the crucifix and tabernacle, the principal objects in the Church). A deep meaning is hidden beneath these different stations of the priest, whether in the middle of the altar, at the left, or at the right side. The left side represents the ancient alliance of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the law of Moses, from the creation of the world to the coming of the Saviour. The right side, the most worthy and the most noble, represents the law of grace and the new dispensation, from the coming of Jesus Christ to the conversion of the Jews, which shall take place in the last ages of the world.

During the greater part of the Mass, the priest, the living symbol of Jesus Christ, stands in the middle of the altar, and thus expresses that the Son of God made Man is the centre at which the old and the new dispensations unite.

The first prayer which he recites is called the Introit, viz., commencement. In this the Church expresses in a general way the object of the feasts which are celebrated during the course of the year. Then he returns to the middle of the altar and recites the Kyrie Eleison, which is composed of three invocations to each of the Adorable Persons of the Blessed Trinity. *Eleison* is a Greek word signifying have mercy.

Then comes the Gloria in Excelsis, a hymn of joy and triumph, which is only recited on feast-days and times of rejoicing. The first words of this magnificent hymn were spoken by the angels of heaven on the birth of the Saviour. The rest, composed fifteen hundred years ago by the great French Bishop, St. Hilary of Poitiers, is the development of the glorious exordium. In reciting it we

should unite ourselves both to the celebrant and to the angels who assist invisibly at the altar, and thus render to God the glory which is due to Him.

The priest then turns to the people with the *Dominus Vobiscum*, having first kissed the altar in order to express that he is about to draw from the very bosom of God the benedictions which it is his mission to shed over the earth. He next recites the prayer called the Collect, viz., union, because it is made in the name of all the faithful, and contains the substance of all petitions. The Church always concludes it by the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ, to make us feel that we have access to God only through Him who reconciled the world. At the beginning of these public prayers the priest says aloud *Oremus* ("Let us pray"), so as to excite the faithful to greater fervor. During this time he keeps his hands extended, according to an ancient custom in the primitive Church instituted by the Apostles, to recall, without doubt, Jesus Christ crucified.

Here terminate those prayers in the preparation which are the most distant from the sacrifice of the Mass. They are followed by the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, and by the recitation of the Creed, of which we shall speak in the next chapter.

FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE CANON.

Epistle means letter, and the first portion of the Sacred Scriptures read in the Mass is so called because it is usually taken from the inspired letters of the Apostles. Sometimes it is taken from the books of the prophets of the Old Testament.

When it is ended the priest moves to the right side of the altar, expressing by this that the blessing of God has been withdrawn from the Jewish people, because they have lost the faith by rejecting Jesus Christ, and has been transferred to the Christian nations who have believed in this divine Saviour.

All rise when the priest begins to read the Gospel and make the sign of the Cross upon the forehead, the lips, and the heart. The Gospel is the abridged history of the principal actions and most important teaching of Our Lord.

We must listen to the divine words standing, to express that we are ready to follow our adorable Master, to serve Him, and to fight for Him. We sign our foreheads as a witness that we are never ashamed of the holy Name we bear; our lips, because they must be holy to pronounce the words of the Gospel; our hearts, to drive away

the devil, and to prepare them to receive the Word of life, and bring forth abundant fruit.

The Gospel being ended, the priest kisses the book as a mark of reverence, and returns to the middle of the altar. There he recites aloud the Credo, or abridged formula of the Christian faith, composed by the Apostles, and developed by the bishops at the first General Council, held at Nice, fifteen hundred years ago. We stand also during the Creed, to manifest clearly our undoubting faith, and our firm resolve that our daily lives shall wholly accord with this our outward and solemn profession. Nevertheless, from a feeling which may be easily understood, both the priest and the faithful kneel humbly and reverently down when saying that the Eternal Son of God "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man," for our salvation. At the end of the Creed all make the sign of the Cross, because it is the visible sign of the faith we have just outwardly professed.

Thus end the two first parts of the preparation for the Mass, which may be called the supplications and instructions.

Then follows the Oblation, or offering of the bread and wine, which shall be changed by consecration into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself, when instituting the Holy Eucharist, showed His Apostles the manner in which they were to offer the divine Sacrifice, and the Church has never departed from this sacred rule.

The priest therefore takes the bread, or Host, upon the paten, a kind of little gilt plate, which always accompanies the chalice, and, having lifted his eyes to heaven to call down a benediction, he elevates the Host, and presents it to the Blessed Trinity, then places it on the corporal, making with the paten the sign of the Cross.

He next goes to the epistle side of the altar, where the server presents to him successively the cruet of wine and that of water, having first kissed them reverently on account of the consecration which is to follow. The priest, having blessed the water, mingles one or two drops with the wine of the chalice; the wine by its strength represents the Divinity of our Saviour, and the drop of water represents His Humanity and ours, sanctified by union with the Divinity. Returning to the middle of the altar, the priest elevates and offers the chalice, just as he elevated and offered the Host. Then lifting his eyes and hands to heaven, he invokes the Holy Spirit that, by His divine fire, the sacrifice and adorable mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption may now be accomplished on the altar. The wash-

ing of hands, which follows these beautiful ceremonies, is a symbol of the perfect purity of heart with which the priest must approach the mysteries of the Body and Blood of Our Lord. Turning to the congregation for the last time, he invites them, with the *Oratio Fratres*, to join their prayers to his, and after some secret prayers commences the magnificent invocation used from the earliest ages of Christianity, and called the Preface (from a Latin word, *præfaci*, which means prayers recited before the consecration). The Preface being completed by the triple invocation, *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth* (viz., "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth"), the acolyte rings the bell to warn the congregation to kneel down, if not already doing so, and to recollect themselves more profoundly now that the moment of the consecration is drawing near.

The sublime prayers which the priest recites in secret before and after the consecration are called the Canon of the Mass; the word canon is derived from the Greek and signifies rule. These prayers are so called because they are invariably the same throughout the Latin Church, while some modifications have been introduced into the less solemn prayers of the Sacrifice. One part of the Canon of the Mass was prescribed by the Apostle St. Peter himself, and when the Sovereign Pontiffs, his successors, judged it right to add some words, these additions were regarded as such an important fact that it was noted in the history of the Church, so great was the veneration for the ancient formulas.

Since the sixth century not one word has been altered in the Canon of the Mass, just as it is said to-day. It is from a feeling of reverence that it is secretly recited. For many centuries the exact words were known only to the ministers of the sanctuary, and the faithful did but join their intention to these prayers. The translation into the vulgar tongue has been many times forbidden. Recollection of mind and heart is preferable at such a moment to all the prayers which can be read or recited.

FROM THE CANON TO THE END.

The Consecration alone is, properly speaking, the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. When the priest, prepared and sanctified by the rites we have now explained, reaches the solemn moment, he takes the Host into his consecrated hands, and, identifying himself most completely with Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Priest and Sovereign Victim of the Sacrifice, he accomplishes the actions and pronounces

the words which the Son of God was the first to accomplish and pronounce at the Last Supper, when He instituted the Holy Eucharist. Thus it is no longer the man who speaks, but Jesus Himself by the lips of His priest. At His divine word, who called forth all creation out of nothing, the bread is changed into His Adorable Body, and the wine into His Precious Blood. And on the altar there remains only the appearance (or species) of bread and wine, veiling from our sight Jesus Christ Himself living and truly present with His sacred Divinity and His holy Humanity in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar!

Standing now before his God, whom he holds within his hands, the priest kneels down and adores, then elevates the Sacred Host for the adoration of the faithful.

The bell is rung three times at the elevation of the Host, and again three times at the elevation of the chalice. Jesus Christ remains thus upon the altar until the Communion. We must therefore kneel down with deep devotion in the presence of our God, during this time at least, and, penetrated with His infinite mercy, worship Him with heartfelt acts of faith, adoration, contrition, and love; and, thanking Him for His inestimable benefits, we should profit by these precious moments to ask our blessed Saviour for everything we need, both for soul and body, for time and for eternity.

If some hear Mass with coldness and indifference, it is because they are wanting both in faith and love.

The solemn silence which envelops the consecration from the Sanctus to the Pater is only interrupted by the touching words of humility which the priest pronounces half aloud, striking his breast, "*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*"—"To us sinners," etc., and the secret prayer of the Canon terminates soon after with the great remembrance of eternity, "*Per omnia sæcula sæculorum*"—"For ever and ever. Amen."

During the Canon of the Mass the priest makes the sign of the Cross many times over the Host and chalice. And the deep meaning thus expressed recalls the whole economy of God's dealings with the human race. When he makes the sign of the Cross three times in succession over the Holy Eucharist, he represents the three phases of the great victory of Christ over Satan, the usurper of His empire and the prince of evil—the first, which ended with the deluge; the second, which ended with the shedding of the Precious Blood on Calvary; the third, which shall end by fire at the defeat of Antichrist, when fallen humanity, forever purified by the Holy Ghost,

the Sanctifier, shall attain its final beatitude. When the priest makes two signs of the Cross in succession over the Host and over the chalice, he recalls the two comings of Our Lord Jesus Christ; the first represented by the Sacred Host, the second by the holy chalice. And even as the two consecrated species are only one and the same Eucharist, one and the same Jesus, one and the same mystery, so also the two comings of the Son of God, though separate and distinct from each other, are only one and the same mystery, the mystery of Jesus Christ, and of His divine grace, and of the Holy Church of God.

After the secret prayers of the Canon, the priest recites aloud the Pater Noster, that sublime prayer which was bequeathed to His own Church by her divine Lord now present on the altar. The priest then breaks the consecrated Host into two particles, thus imitating Jesus Christ, who broke the Sacred Bread before He distributed it to His disciples at the Last Supper. This ceremony also recalls, in a mystical way, the separation of the Soul and Body of the Saviour in the sacrifice of Calvary. Then he invokes three times, under the touching title of Lamb of God, the Divine Eternal Victim of the sins of the whole world, He who, though reigning forever omnipotent in the highest heaven, still annihilates Himself for us day after day in the sacred mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

The time of the priest's communion now draws near, and he is about to receive within his heart, and to unite his whole being to his Creator and his Saviour Jesus Christ; and, taking in one hand the Living Bread come down from heaven, he strikes his breast three times, acknowledges his deep unworthiness, and says, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed."

Then he communicates, and remaining for an instant wholly penetrated by the sacred presence of the God of love, whose living tabernacle he has now become, he takes the chalice, makes upon himself the sign of the Cross, and communicates under the second species.

If any of the faithful present themselves at the altar, the servers repeat the Confiteor aloud, during which each one should excite himself to repentance. The communicants, then kneeling reverently at the altar rail, hold the cloth upon their extended hands to receive the Sacred Host, if by any misfortune it should fall. The priest, while placing the Blessed Sacrament upon the tongue, says, "May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to life everlasting. Amen."

After having communicated, the priest receives the ablutions, and the server pours wine and water over his fingers which have touched the Blessed Sacrament; then he wipes the chalice and covers it over, folds the corporal, and puts everything in its place.

During this the server removes the Missal from the right side to the left, a symbol of the future conversion of the Jews, God's ancient people, who are also destined, before the end of the world, to participate in the light of the Gospel. And just as the return of the Jews will take place, according to the ancient prophecies, a little time before the end of the world, so this simple ceremony, by which it is prefigured, takes place a little before the end of the Mass.

The priest then turns to the congregation for the last time, dismisses them, and blesses them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by making over them the sign of eternal salvation; and at this moment he is truly a striking image of Jesus Christ at His last coming, when He shall complete the work of His Church by His supreme benediction: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Formerly the Mass ended with this benediction, after which the priest left the altar, reciting the first verses of the Gospel according to St. John; but the custom has now prevailed of reading this Gospel at the altar itself.

We trust that the little that has been said may increase your reverence for divine things and help you to assist with more devotion at the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass.

THE CEREMONIES OF HIGH MASS.

THE two different methods of celebrating Mass are distinguished by the terms Low Mass and High Mass, or the Mass which is sung.

As regards the respective excellence of the two, no difference exists, and the only distinction arises from the outward solemnity of the ceremonies. The principal difference is expressed by the name. Low Mass is said, and High Mass is sung. Christian services were not always accompanied with singing, and it appears that during the first three centuries of the Church the sacred prayers were simply recited. But when the fury of the persecutions had ceased, and the conversion of the Roman empire permitted the Christians to celebrate the sacred mysteries without fear, they became eager to add

to their solemnity, not only by the magnificence of the churches, the vestments, and the sacred vessels, but also by music and singing.

One of the holiest popes who has ever governed the Church, St Gregory the Great, did not consider it beneath his supreme dignity to make regulations with regard to the ecclesiastical or plain chant, which is called for this reason the Gregorian Chant. St. Gregory collected and revised the sacred chants already in use, and added to them a great number which he had composed himself. During the course of centuries, great saints, popes, bishops, monks, emperors, and kings, and sometimes even pious queens, have enriched with their own compositions this venerable collection, known at the present time under the name of the Roman Chant. Formerly the praises of God were sung only by ecclesiastics consecrated entirely to the service of the altar. But now that the number of the ministers of the sanctuary has so greatly diminished, the choir is usually composed of members of the laity, who fulfil this holy duty either for a salary or from a spirit of religion.

We have explained the ceremonies of Low Mass, and will therefore only add a few words concerning the rites peculiar to the solemn High Mass.

The first of these ceremonies is the Asperges, or sprinkling with holy water, which has just been sanctified by the priest with special benedictions; and this is intended to remind the Christian people how holy their lives should be, and with what purity of heart they should assist at the sacred mysteries. It is for the same reason that there is always holy water at the door of the church, with which all should bless themselves on entering.

After the Asperges, and before the Mass, comes the Procession, a grand and beautiful ceremony, common in the Church from the first centuries, and full of deep significance; for Processions are typical of the onward march of the Church throughout succeeding ages. For even as it comes forth from the sacristy, to which it shall finally return, preceded by the cross and terminated by the priest, who is the living symbol of Jesus Christ, thus the Church, coming forth from God her Creator, to return to Him at the end of time, has for her Divine Head Jesus Christ the Son of God, the principle and the end of all things, who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is only by marching under His divine standard and uniting ourselves to Him that we can hope to reach our heavenly home at last. And it is most foolish and ill-judged to criticise the devotion of the faithful who delight to join in Processions. At High Mass the

priest is assisted by two ecclesiastics call the deacon and sub deacon. The sub-deacon represents the patriarchs, prophets, and saints of the Old Testament, and the people of God, who were specially chosen and called to give to the world the Sacred Humanity of the promised Messiah; the office of the sub-deacon at the altar is to prepare the bread and wine destined to become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and also to sing the prophecies and the Epistles. And just as the ancient dispensation, after having prepared and produced the holy humanity of Jesus Christ, refused to acknowledge Him as the world's Redeemer, and did not profit by His sacrifice, so the sub-deacon, after having presented to the deacon the elements of the sacrifice, descends to the foot of the altar, being in a manner excluded from the mysteries about to be celebrated, and remains enveloped in a long veil from the Offertory to the Pater, holding the paten before his eyes to signify the blindness of the Jewish people. But since this blindness will cease before the end of the world, and the ancient people of God will become His chosen people once again, and participate in the merits of the Saviour, so the sub-deacon, after the Pater Noster, goes up again to the altar and stands by the side of the celebrant once more. As the representative of the new dispensation, the deacon alone is charged to sing the Gospel and assist the priest during the whole of the Mass. The singing of the Gospel forms one of the most solemn rites. After having placed the holy book upon the altar, in the same place where the sacred Body of the Lord will presently repose, the deacon, bowing down, asks God to cleanse his heart and lips that he may worthily announce the divine words. He then takes the book, and, holding it on his breast, receives the benediction of the priest, and carries it to the place appointed for the singing of the Gospel, preceded by the cross, and by acolytes carrying lighted candles and incense. The cross signifies that the Gospel contains the law of a crucified God, and the candles that the word of Jesus Christ is the light of the world; the incense is the homage rendered to the divinity of Our Lord.

When the holy reading is ended, the open book is reverently carried to the priest, who kisses it, saying, "May our sins be blotted out by the words of the Gospel."

After the Gospel the sermon is preached, and is usually an explanation of the Gospel which has just been read. One other ceremony which distinguishes High Mass from Low Mass is the use of incense, symbolical of the prayers of the faithful

THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS.

THESE are the first words of one of the most beautiful prayers of the Catholic Church, taken from the canticle of the angels who, during the night of Christmas, hailed the birth of Christ, the Eternal King, the Adorable Creator, the Almighty Lord, and the most gentle, and loving, and merciful Saviour.

After having implored the pardon of our sins by the Kyrie Eleison, the priest of God; lifting his hands and eyes to heaven, intones or recites aloud the angelical hymn:

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!

"Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Thou who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayers. Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For Thou only art holy: Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen."

The first words of this magnificent hymn are taken literally from the Gospel. The holy angels who were sent by God to announce to the shepherds of Bethlehem the coming of Jesus Christ were the first to sing, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will." And thus the priest, sent by God to men, addresses to them the same words at the commencement of the Mass, to tell them to prepare themselves to receive worthily the same Jesus, who is so soon to descend upon the altar, humble, hidden, small, and helpless, as in the crib of Bethlehem, and veiling His divine Majesty beneath the appearance of the Sacred Host in the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament.

The shepherds of Bethlehem, men righteous and devout, faithfully responded to this heavenly invitation; they believed, adored, blessed, and praised with their whole hearts the God of heaven, as a little weak and helpless child; and though hidden in His deep humility beneath the form of His own creatures, beneath the form of flesh and blood, they recognized by faith the Infinite, Eternal Son of God,

whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the angels of heaven continually adore. And this is what we too must do, His Christian children, at the invitation of our priests; from the very depths of our hearts we must say to our dear Lord, so soon to descend for us upon the altar: "We bless Thee, we adore Thee, we give Thee thanks, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, have mercy on us; for Thou only; O Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

The words of the Gloria, which follow the Canticle of the Angels, belong to the first ages of the Church. Many learned writers attribute them to St. Telesphorus, one of the popes, martyred in the second century; many others to the great St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, who lived in the fourth century. But it is certain that this beautiful prayer clearly embodies the Catholic doctrine with regard to the mystery of the Incarnation, attacked in the time of Hilary by the heresy of the Arians, and energetically defended by that great bishop. The Arians pretended that the Son of God was not equal in all things to the Father and the Holy Ghost, and that thus Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God made man, was inferior to His Father. The Gloria gives a triumphant contradiction to this error by putting into our lips these words to say to Jesus our divine Lord, who is perfect God and perfect man: "We adore Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son: O Lord God, Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, receive our prayers. Have mercy on us, Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father (that is to say, who art His equal and sharest His almighty power); For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father." We must therefore always sing the Gloria with lively sentiments of faith and love for Jesus Christ, and thus unite ourselves to the faith and love of the angels, who invisibly assist the priest at the altar while he celebrates the most holy sacrifice of the Mass.

VESPERS AND BENEDICTIONS.

THE evening service usually consists of Vespers, Compline, and Benediction. The word Vespers signifies evening prayers. No one is positively obliged to be present at these offices, but good Catholics consider it a duty. Formerly it was an obligation to assist at Vespers as well as at Mass.

Vespers are usually composed of five psalms, a hymn, the Magnificat, and a prayer. After having recited the Pater Noster and Ave Maria in secret, the celebrant, standing, and turned to the altar, makes the sign of the cross, to show that our prayers have access to God only through the merits of Jesus Christ crucified, and sings at the same time these words, with which the divine office always commences: "*Deus, in adiutorium meum intende*"—"O God, come to my assistance." It was Pope Gregory the Great, who, twelve hundred years ago, directed that this versicle, taken from the sixty-ninth Psalm, should be recited before each of the hours. It is followed by the Gloria Patri, or Invocation to the Blessed Trinity, in whose honor the faithful assemble for prayer. *Alleluia* is a Hebrew word which signifies Glory to God.

As we do not wish to speak here of the Psalms in detail, we shall only say that it is impossible to judge of the beauty of these holy canticles from the ordinary translations in our prayer-books. It is said that by being translated from the original Hebrew into the Latin tongue, much of their beauty has been lost, and a second translation deteriorates from them still more. Inspired by the Holy Ghost, and expressing the interior sentiments of Jesus Christ, of the Church, and of all faithful souls, the Psalms, to the number of a hundred and fifty, form one of the most precious books of the Holy Scripture.

Almost all were composed by the prophet-king, David, about a thousand years before the coming of the Saviour. They are filled with sublime prophecies relating to the Son of God, who declared with His own divine lips that it was of Him that David wrote in the Psalms.

Vespers almost always commence with the psalm *Dixit Dominus*. This Psalm, which Jesus Christ applied to Himself in the hearing of the Pharisees, who desired to tempt Him, foreshadows, in a few verses, the divinity, the incarnation, the priesthood, the almighty power, the reign, and the sufferings of the Saviour.

Many of the tunes to which the psalms are sung have been borrowed from the Greek Chant, and are of the greatest antiquity; and this beautiful and religious harmony is truly calculated to produce an impression truly worthy of the holiness of Christianity. And here we must repeat what we said of the High Mass: Psalms are not only prayers, they are prayers in song. They must be sung, and not simply recited. It is a deplorable custom to have Vespers and Benediction without music, and one which robs these choral offices both of their interest and solemnity.

All the psalms end with the Doxology, which the ecclesiastics recite with uncovered head, and during which all should bend. This is a very ancient custom in the Christian Church. It is attributed to the Pope St. Damasus, who lived in the fourth century; but it is greatly anterior to his pontificate. The Antiphon consists of a few words, intended to recall to the faithful the spirit of the mysteries celebrated in the Liturgy. They are sung differently to the psalms to avoid monotony. Before the Magnificat comes a hymn, which is also intended to celebrate the feast of the day. In the Roman Liturgy the greater part of these hymns are sacred memorials of Christian antiquity, the poetic and religious inspiration of the Popes, St. Gelasius, St. Damasus, St. Gregory the Great, of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and many other Pontiffs and Doctors of all centuries.

Vespers end with the solemn chant of the Magnificat. This divine canticle, taken entirely from the Gospel, was recited for the first time by the Blessed Virgin herself on the day of her visitation to her cousin, St. Elizabeth. St. Bernard calls it "the canticle of humility." For the Blessed Virgin, in answer to the praises addressed to her as the Mother of God, only spoke of her own lowliness, and of the mercy of God who had so magnified her. During the Magnificat every one stands, out of reverence for the words of the Gospel. The same rule is observed at Compline for the canticle *Nunc dimittis*, also taken from the Gospel of St. Luke.

After the first verses of the Magnificat the altar is incensed, and also the priest, the ecclesiastics, and the faithful. Incense, which ever mounts in clouds of perfume up to heaven, is symbolical of prayer: "Let my prayer, O Lord, be directed as incense in Thy sight." The fire, without which incense cannot be used, is the symbol of the Holy Ghost, of Jesus Christ, without whom we cannot pray or gain access to God. The altar is incensed because it represents the divinity of Jesus Christ; and the priest, the ecclesiastics, and the congregation are incensed to honor Jesus Christ, who dwells within the members of His Church in order to render them participants in His eternal life; and the priests are incensed a second time to honor also the Divine Priesthood of Our Lord, in which they share by their sacred character. During this time all should recollect themselves, and renew their resolutions to be ever worthy of their holy vocation.

Compline (Latin *con, pleo*, signifying completion of the prayers of the office) is composed, like Vespers, of some psalms, a hymn, and a

canticle, and was instituted by St. Benedict, in the fifth century to prepare his religious for the night's repose. The Roman Church considered this such a beautiful idea that she adopted it, and made it a general rule. Compline terminates by an invocation to the Blessed Virgin, which varies according to the different religious epochs of the year. The principal, the *Salve Regina*, is a memorial of the Crusades, and was composed in the year 1096 by a celebrated French warrior, named Adhémar de Monteil, who, being consecrated to the service of God, and having become Bishop of Puy, took part, as Papal Legate, in the first Crusade.

The evening office usually ends with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a devotion chiefly extended during the sixteenth century in order to make reparation to our blessed Lord for all the blasphemy and sacrilegious outrages of those unhappy times against the Holy Sacrament. Benediction consists of some prayers sung, such as the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and other prayers special to the feast that is celebrated; after which the Tabernacle is opened, and the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the midst of a certain number of lighted candles. Benediction may be given by simply exposing the holy ciborium in which Jesus Christ reposes; but in solemn Benediction the monstrance is used, a sacred vessel in the form of a star, the centre of which, being made of crystal, allows the Blessed Sacrament to be seen. Each one prostrates himself in the sacred presence of God. The priest incenses three times, to honor the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and then intones the *Tantum Ergo Sacramentum*, composed by St. Thomas Aquinas in honor of the most holy Sacrament; it is sung by the choir, and followed by a prayer; after which the priest, being enveloped in a long white veil, symbolizing the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ, with which His ministers should be clothed in order to approach Him worthily, goes up to the altar, prostrates himself, takes the monstrance, and turns to the people; the ringing of the bell warns the congregation of the solemn moment; and our blessed Lord, present in the Sacrament of His love, blesses His children Himself. It is for this reason that the Benediction is given in silence.

In concluding this chapter, I would recommend my readers, not only to be present at the holy services of the Church, but to join in them with reverence and devotion. May a constant remembrance of the Presence of our dear Lord in the Tabernacle keep them ever serious and recollected. May they carefully abstain from talking, yawning, making a noise, or looking about, and apply themselves with all

their hearts to prayer. May they join their voices when they can in the music of the Church, and thus give to all the good example of sanctifying those times and seasons which are consecrated to God.

THE PSALMS.

WE have already spoken of the Psalms, but it is so important and so practical a subject that we must return to it once more.

The Psalms are prophetic hymns and divinely inspired prayers, and were almost all composed by the prophet-kings David and Solomon. They form one of the most beautiful books of the Holy Scriptures, and it is of faith that all the hundred and fifty are inspired.

The Psalms are all prophecies, in the sense that they all express more or less clearly the adorable mysteries of our redemption. There is a great number of which we are bound to believe this; the *Dixit Dominus*, for instance, which Our Lord Jesus Christ interprets by applying to Himself in the twenty-second chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The Fathers of the Church have all interpreted the Psalms by applying them directly to Our Lord, and to all the mysteries of His divine kingdom from the beginning to the end of time. These holy canticles relate equally to the second coming of Jesus Christ and His final triumph both on earth and in heaven, and to His first coming, followed by the terrible struggles of His militant Church. In almost all the Psalms there is what may be called an outward and historical meaning, which is only of passing interest, while their real value consists in all that relates to the personages or events figurative of the Messiah. David himself, like so many in the Old Testament, was indeed a prophetic figure of the Christ-King who was to come hereafter; and the accounts of the greater part of the events of his reign, and of the reign of Solomon, which gave occasion for the composition of the Psalms, were only prophecies, only symbols of great and divine mysteries, which Jesus Christ Himself was one day to accomplish, as King of the true Israel, King of the Holy Church, first militant, and then triumphant. The combats of David and the glories of Solomon have comparatively little interest for us; but that which does interest us, closely and personally, are the combats and triumphs in which Jesus Christ, our King, engages and overcomes with us, and in us, for the salvation of our souls and for the glory of God.

We must, therefore, pierce through the outward and historical meaning which lies upon the surface to reach the hidden spiritual and

Christian meaning, which is not only the most important, but the only important teaching of the Psalms. The Christian who does not discover Jesus Christ beneath the outward letter does not rightly understand what he reads. St. Augustine used to teach the people of Hipponium that Jesus Christ is to all the books of Holy Scripture, but especially to the Psalms, just what the soul is to the body; the historical portions, he added, have no other object than to represent and to manifest the mysteries of Jesus the Saviour, even as the wood of a lyre is only placed there by the workman in order to sustain the strings, and to cause them to vibrate beneath the touch of a skilful musician. "If, therefore, in reciting the Psalm, you have there discovered Christ, you have found the true sense—*Si intellexisti Christum, tunc intellexisti*; if, on the contrary, you have not discovered Christ, you have not found the true sense—*Si Christum non intellexisti, non intellexisti*." This observation is sufficient to make clear to us the divine significance of all the Psalms, and to teach us also that they are not easily understood. But it is very consoling to know that when we recite them as prayers they greatly glorify God, because Jesus Christ, who prays in us and with us, supplies for our ignorance by grasping in our stead the full purport of the words which He Himself inspired to His prophets. Jesus Christ praises and glorifies His Heavenly Father by these Psalms, in the name of the whole Church, in the name of all creation, in the name of heaven and earth; and in this we are greatly honored, that Our Lord has made choice of our lips and our poor faltering words as a living organ by means of which these holy canticles may be ever echoed and repeated from one generation to another throughout succeeding ages. In reciting them, we must therefore, first of all, unite ourselves to Jesus, who, as St. Paul says, prays within us and in whom we pray—"Christus, in quo oramus." It is far sweeter and more devotional to sing the Psalms than simply to recite them.

The same psalm has often many different meanings, all equally true. One example will be sufficient to explain this. Take, for instance, this short one which every one knows, the hundred and sixteenth—

Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes; laudate eum omnes populi. Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia ejus; et veritas Domini manet in æternum.

Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people. Because His mercy is confirmed upon us: and the truth of the Lord remaineth forever.

First sense: It is the prayer which the Saviour uttered during the days of His mortal life, to express to His Heavenly Father the desires He offered up, as the Redeemer of mankind, that all the nations

of the earth should acknowledge, bless, and love the one true God, and reap the benefits of the Redemption, and see the Lord reign over them for ever.

Second sense: The same prayer and the same desires offered up by Jesus Christ living in His Church, and gaining by her means all nations to the one true faith.

Third sense: It is the prayer of the Church, of the Pope, of the priests, and the faithful rejoicing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and calling upon all infidels and heretics to share in this great happiness with them.

Fourth sense: It is the prophetic cry of King David, who from afar hailed the future Messiah, Christ the Lord, and invited all nations, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, to adore Him, and to desire Him to reign over them; it is prophetic of the universal reign of Jesus Christ, and of His Church, at the end of time before the last judgment; it is prophetic of the return of the Jewish people, who, after having denied the Christ, shall be perfectly converted, and shall receive, through the mercy of God, the confirmation of the ancient promises.

Fifth sense: It is a prayer prophetic of the glory of Jesus Christ at His second coming, and of the joy of the militant Church, which finds consolation in her present trials, and for the hardness of heart of so many people, by contemplating from afar the universal and eternal triumph of the true Solomon. This psalm is as certainly a prophecy for us as it was for David; for it announces to us events which are not yet realized, namely, the entire and simultaneous conversion of all nations, the final return of the Jews and their restoration to all their ancient religious privileges, and lastly, the eternal reign of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the Truth, the Living and Incarnate Truth, *Veritas Domini*.

This beautiful psalm is also a canticle of sacred joy, and of acts of thanksgiving, by which we thank God for all the graces which He gives us.

By this short example we may judge a little of the spiritual treasures hidden in the Psalms.

We will give one other example, but in a few words only. The Miserere is known to every one. It is the cry of repentance, yet of sweet and humble confidence, which goes upward to the throne of God. 1st, from the Sacred Heart and the Divine Lips of Jesus, burdened with our sins, and asking pardon of God for the whole world's iniquity, of which He is the Victim; 2d, from the Sacred Heart and the Divine Lips of Jesus, living in His Church, and through

her doing penance for the sins of all mankind; 3d, from the heart and lips of every Christian, of each poor sinner, first for his own sins, and then for those of his brethren. Much more might be added, but the little I have said will be sufficient to give to pious souls a key to many other psalms. Let us therefore love to sing them, these sacred canticles of Our Lord, in imitation of the faithful of the early Church. The melody to which the Church has set them is full of beauty, and yet so simple that the most ignorant can easily join in them. The tunes to which they are sung come from the East, and are of great antiquity. The singing of the Psalms lifts up the heart to God. The Church invites us all to sing; and if some grow tired in Church, it is because they do not enter into the Catholic form of prayer, and do not sing with their brethren.

Our Lord Himself, in many psalms, invites us thus to sing His praises: "Sing, sing unto the Lord! Sing with understanding: Let the whole earth sing the praises of God!"—*Cantate Domino, omnis terra!*"

THE DIXIT DOMINUS.

THIS Psalm, which is the hundred and ninth, is well known to the faithful, because the Church sings it always on Sundays and feast-days at the beginning of the evening office. It is a magnificent prophecy which exalts the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the conqueror of Satan in His own Divine Person at His first coming, and as the conqueror of Satan in His Church, and in all His elect throughout all ages, but especially at His second coming. "The Lord said to my Lord"—*Dixit Dominus Domino meo.*" God the Father is Lord, as God the Son is Lord, as God the Holy Ghost is Lord; nevertheless the Son of God, having become the King of this world by the mystery of His Incarnation, is henceforth Our Lord and Master by a double title; thus we say in the Creed, "I believe in One God the Father Almighty, . . . and in one Lord Jesus Christ." . . .

Jesus, notwithstanding His sacred humanity, by which He became the minister of God and His most perfect servant, is eternally equal in all things to the Father and the Holy Ghost. He is God, and as His humanity is united to His divinity in one indivisible Person who is Divine, Eternal, and Almighty, the Father says to His well-beloved Son, risen and ascending into heaven, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool"—*Sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.*" God has neither right nor left, since He is a pure Spirit: the right hand of

God signifies complete equality in power and glory, and a full participation in the eternal royalty of the Father. Neither is Jesus Christ seated in celestial glory; for heaven is an ineffable state, quite different to earth; even glorified bodies have no relation, no resemblance to what we see here below; thus, in heaven bodies no longer occupy space; they have an existence which St. Paul calls spiritual, *corpus spiritale*; a divine supernatural condition which finite minds cannot conceive, and from which it follows, among other things, that Our Lord can be, and is, truly and entirely present in every consecrated Host in the whole world; and that in breaking or in moving the Sacred Host the divine celestial Body of Our Lord is neither moved nor broken.

“We break the Sacrament; but bold
And firm thy faith shall keep its hold;
Deem not the whole doth more enfold
Than in the fractured part resides.
Deem not the Christ doth broken lie,
’Tis but the sign that meets the eye;
The great unseen Reality
In all its fulness still abides.”

The “enemies” of Jesus Christ are the impious, the unbelieving, the sinful, and all who wilfully oppose the law and the Church of God. At the present day, as in all ages, Jesus Christ has many enemies; revolutionary spirits who attack the Papacy and the Church; governments which endeavor to stamp out even the semblance of religion from their councils; men who dive so deeply into the wonders of creation that they become bewildered by the very vastness of the divine conceptions, and end by denying the God from whom they have received the power to reason or think at all; systems of education based upon the false assumption that any amelioration in the condition of the poor is to be effected by a purely secular teaching, which leaves those better, higher impulses that exist, even in the most degraded of mankind, neglected and uncultivated; while the whole history of the human race will prove that religion and civilization go ever hand in hand. And lastly, false Christians, unworthy Catholics, who attack or abandon what they profess to respect, and thus furnish dangerous weapons for the enemies of Jesus Christ and of His Holy Church.

The most terrible of all the enemies of Jesus will be the Antichrist; St. Paul calls him “the eldest son of Satan.” He will reign for a time over the whole earth; he will persecute the Church; he will call himself the Christ, and will work miracles by the power of Satan,

"insomuch as to deceive even the elect." But at the moment when everything will seem to be lost, Our Lord will appear in the majesty of His glory, and will crush His enemy, as well as his most guilty followers, and, as the psalm adds, "Shall send forth the rod of His power out of Sion—" *Virgam virtutis tuæ emittet Dominus ex Sion.*" For, according to ancient traditions, it will be at Sion, upon Mount Calvary, that Our Lord will forever subdue the Antichrist and Satan; and as at His first coming it was from Jerusalem that the militant Church went forth to conquer the world and to fight the good fight, so, at the second coming (which will probably not be a moment, but an epoch like the first; an epoch of universal glory and triumph for the Holy Church; an epoch of repose after the combat; the Sabbath of the great week which will precede the Sunday of Eternity), so, I say, at the second coming of the Redeemer, it is from Jerusalem, the Holy City, the city of Jesus and of Mary, that salvation, glory, and the life eternal shall be poured forth like a torrent of love over the whole earth. Then, Satan being vanquished and bound, as St. John says, all the world will be Christian; there will be only one fold and one Shepherd, and Jesus will reign supremely over all His creatures. It is this which is foretold in the Dixit Dominus: "Rule Thou," the Father says to Him, "in the midst of Thine enemies"—"*Domina-re in medio inimicorum tuorum.*" For the principle of all triumph, all strength, and all sanctity is in Thyself; "*tecum principium;*" Thou art the Lord.

"*In die virtutis tuæ, in splendoribus sanctorum*"—"In the day of Thy power, amid the brightness of the saints." This triumphal day of Jesus Christ is first the day of His resurrection and His glorious ascension; and still more is it the day of His second coming, the day of the great triumph and resurrection of His Church, when He shall establish her forever, "amid the brightness of the saints." And the saints are all the elect, the great prophets, Apostles, martyrs, and servants of Jesus Christ, who shall arise gloriously at the moment of His coming, and after having shared His combats shall participate in the triumph of their Head. If we are but faithful to Our Lord till death, we shall reign with Him forever.

The psalm adds to the glory of Jesus Christ these beautiful words, which proclaim His precedence over every creature, and His eternal Priesthood: "*Ex utero ante luciferum genui te. Juravit Dominus, et non pœnitebit eum: Tu es sacerdos in æternum*"—"From the womb before the day-star have I begotten Thee. (It is always God the Father who speaks to His Son.) The Lord hath sworn and will

not repent: Thou art a Priest forever." Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, the Son of God and of the Blessed Virgin, is, as St. Paul says, the first-born of every creature, not in the order of time, but in the order of grace, and of the reign of God over His creatures. In this sense Jesus is the first and the chief; He was before Mary, before David, before Abraham, before Adam and Eve, before every creature, before the light, before the Angels and before Lucifer, the first and highest of the Angels, who refused to acknowledge and adore the Son of God in the Son of Mary, who desired to usurp the universal royalty of Jesus, and who, as a punishment for this sacrilege, was, and is, and will forever be cast down from heaven to earth, vanquished by his Lord and Our Lord Jesus Christ. At the second coming Lucifer and the world will both be vanquished by us, the living members of the King of glory.

Jesus Christ is "a Priest forever," because He is the Mediator between God and men; the Mediator who gives God to men and unites men to God, who offers to the Divine Majesty a perpetual sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, prayer, and pardon, who teaches truth and religion to men, who blesses, consoles, sanctifies and saves them: and such is the ministry of the priest. Jesus Christ is at the same time the great Creator, the living God, the only Lord, the King, the Priest, and the Saviour of men.

He is a priest according to the order of Melchisedec, "*secundum ordinem Melchisedechæ*." Like unto the mysterious King of Salem, who offered up from Abraham a singular sacrifice of bread and wine, Jesus Christ instituted on Holy Thursday in the Cenaculum, under the form and the appearances of bread and wine, the sacrifice of the new alliance, in which He perpetually immolates Himself on our altars, until the end of the world, in the hands and by the ministry of His priests. Jesus is the eternal Priest and the Eucharistic Victim. His ministers are priests only because He communicates to them his own Divine Priesthood in the sacrament of Holy Orders. "*Dominus a dextris tuis: confregit in die iræ suæ reges.*" O Father omnipotent! Thy Divine Son is therefore at Thy right hand, and it is He who shall overthrow kings in the day of His wrath. The day of God's wrath is, generally speaking, the day in which the sinner receives the punishment due to his sins, whether it be in this world or the next; but it is more especially the day upon which Jesus shall come again in glory and shall strike with a single blow the Antichrist and the ten kings of whom the Scripture speaks. The words of the psalm also refer to the fallen spirits with Satan at their head,

whom Our Lord shall cast down forever upon that great and terrible day. Then Jesus shall become the sole Judge, the supreme Judge of all the nations of the earth; *judicabit in nationibus*. He will wholly destroy, from one end of the world to the other, all the works of the devil. He will annihilate all evil, and will establish everywhere that primitive order, that divine harmony which, in Eden, constituted the happiness of unfallen man; the whole earth will become upon this seventh day of the world the great terrestrial paradise, the great kingdom of Jesus Christ; and the joyful Church will forget, beneath the peaceful sceptre of the Divine Solomon, the cruel enemies whom she was forced to encounter in that onward march which led her to this perfect day, this great Easter-tide, this glorious resurrection! Her humiliations and her griefs are now no more; their measure will be henceforth the measure of her immutable glory; "*de torrente in via bibet, propterea exaltabit caput.*"

The accomplishment of this great prophecy is to be seen from the first conquest of Jesus Christ in the person of His martyrs, even until that day so greatly to be desired, when it will be perfectly accomplished by the complete and universal triumph of Jesus Christ, and of His holy Church. With what sentiments of hope and Christian enthusiasm, with what lively and consoling faith should we sing this beautiful psalm, if we did but reflect a little on the great events which it proclaims.

LAUDATE, PUERI, DOMINUM.

As this psalm recurs so often in the offices of the Church, we think it might be serviceable to give a short explanation of it here; it is the hundred and eleventh, and is a very beautiful and touching hymn of gratitude and love.

"Praise the Lord, ye children: praise ye the name of the Lord"—"*Laudate, pueri, Dominum; laudate nomen Domini.*" Who are these children of God? Who is the Lord? What is His holy Name? Jesus is the Lord, and it is His sacred Name which must be ever praised and blessed; for the name of any person is the sensible sign which expresses, represents, and manifests him to the world. Jesus is the Name of our God and King, that is to say, that Jesus Our Lord expresses and manifests in His own Divine Person the one true living God, making God known to men, rendering God present in the midst of the world, and being Himself a visible, tangible, and perfect image of the great invisible Creator, of the God who, but

through Jesus Christ, cannot be known or possessed by any creature, because, as St. Paul says, He "inhabitest light inaccessible." He who knows Jesus Christ, knows God; he who knows not Jesus Christ, knows not God, knows not the true Name of God; for Jesus is "the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance."

The children who are thus called upon to praise Jesus, to praise the living Name of God, and all angels, are all Christians, from the beginning to the end of time. Jesus is indeed for every creature the divine and human centre, create and uncreate, of the one true faith.

Hear the unfaltering response of all the servants of God, angels and men, to this invitation! "*Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc nunc et usque in seculum;*" Blessed be the name of the Lord: from this time forth for evermore! From the rising up of the sun, that is, from the day that Jesus triumphed over Satan, when the light shone in darkness, until the evening, yea, even until the end of time, we must praise our heavenly King, our divine Lord, the well-beloved name of our well-beloved God: "*A solis ortu usque ad occasum laudabile nomen Domini.*"

And next, we have a prophecy of the Saviour's future reign over every nation: "*Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus, et super cœlos gloria ejus.*" "The heavens" here spoken of are the angels; the holy angels whose celestial glory is infinitely beneath the glory of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, and also the wicked angels who desired to usurp this incommunicable glory, and who for this crime are cast down to the lowest depths of hell. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, and regardeth the things that are lowly in heaven and in earth?"—"Quis sicut Dominus, Deus noster, qui in altis habitat? et humilia respicit in cœlo et in terra?"

The more humble and lowly the creature, the more highly is he blessed and loved by the Creator; the more he abases himself, so much the more does God exalt him. Jesus, in His Sacred Humanity, annihilated Himself before the majesty of His Father with a humility so perfect, so complete, so full of love, that He merited, as the Apostle said, to be exalted by His heavenly Father, and, even in His humanity, to share so completely in the glory and eternal royalty of God that in the name of Jesus, of the Word Incarnate, of the Son of Mary, every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. It is He who is raised up from the earth, and who, after suffering the deepest humiliation, takes His place among the angels above principalities and powers; "*Suscitans a terra inopem, et de stercore erigens pauperem, ut collocet eum cum principibus populi*

sui." And Jesus raises and lifts up to heaven all His servants who are meek and humble of heart as He was without vanity and without pride, *inopem et pauperem*; before all others, and above all others, He thus exalts, crowns, and glorifies the most humble Virgin Mary, the purest and holiest of creatures, because she was the lowliest; and His great servants both in heaven and earth, whose name and beatitude we venerate; the seraphims and archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael; in the ancient law, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Job, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and the other prophets; in the new law, St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, and all the Apostles; St. Mary Magdalen and St. Martha; and all those great saints who, from the very cradle of Christianity up to the present day, have shone as glorious luminaries in the firmament of holy Church.

Jesus, from the height of His glory, and from the depths of the holy tabernacle where He dwells in the blessed Eucharist, is the principle of the life and fecundity of His Church: the ancient Church, the Church of the Jews, had life and brought forth fruit so long as it believed in Him, from the time of Moses until the Incarnation; but since it rejected Him, it has become sterile, and has wandered throughout succeeding ages desolate and dishonored. Before the second coming of the Saviour, and even before the coming of Antichrist, this Church will be converted, will return to her primitive faith, to the faith of the Prophets, to the faith of Abraham and of the holy Patriarchs, to the Christian Catholic faith; Jesus, by His grace, will draw her from the desert and bring her back once more to the Father's home, where, acknowledging the true Messiah, she will find again with Him the principle of life and fecundity, of happiness and joy. This is prophesied in the last verse of the beautiful psalm we have explained: "*Qui habitare facit sterilem in domo, matrem filiorum lætantem.*"

THE DE PROFUNDIS.

THE De Profundis is the hundred and twenty-ninth psalm. From the origin of Christianity the Church has chosen it for the funeral chant, and the principal prayer at Christian burials. It is indeed a psalm full of hope and full of sweetness, and yet, at the same time, expressive of humility and sadness. As we recite it every day, or at least very often for the repose of the faithful departed, a brief explanation may be of some use. "*De profundis clamavi ad te Dom-*

ine"—“Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord!” And first, it is Jesus Christ who speaks thus, overwhelmed with all confusion, and annihilated before the infinite holiness of His Father; out of pure love for us He has taken upon Himself the weight of our iniquity; and this heavy weight which drags us down into the lowest depths of hell reduces our dear Lord and our most holy Victim to the last degree of abasement of which a creature can be capable. “*De profundis*,” out of the depths of this abyss of humiliation, Jesus cries to His Father: “Lord, hear my voice, let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication!”—“*Domine exaudi vocem meam. Fiant aures tuæ intendentes in vocem deprecationis meæ.*” The prayer of Jesus is always heard by the Father, because, although He is the victim of sin, the well-beloved Son of Mary is ever the eternal object of the Father’s complacency. The pardon that we could not obtain for ourselves, our Saviour asks and obtains for us. This is why, in reciting the De Profundis, we should unite ourselves interiorly to Jesus Christ dwelling within our hearts; this is a truth we cannot repeat too often.

As Jesus Christ is our God as well as our Advocate, we may also address to Him these beautiful words of the De Profundis: O Lord Jesus, out of the depths of my misery I lift up my voice unto Thee; deign to hear my prayer, O Thou who hast wept and suffered and died to deliver me from this abyss.

And lastly, the Church teaches us to sing these same words for the holy souls who are plunged in the terrible depths of purgatory; and by virtue of the Communion of Saints which unites into one body all the Christians of heaven, of earth, and of purgatory, we lend our lips and words to these poor suffering souls to obtain for them a speedy and perfect deliverance.

“*Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine, Domine quis sustenebit ?*”—“If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities: Lord, who shall abide it?” This is the utterance of true humility. This is indeed the cry of the poor sinner who acknowledges all his unworthiness, and abandons himself utterly to the infinite mercy of God! But as true humility is always accompanied with love and hope, the Psalm immediately adds—“With Thee there is merciful forgiveness, and because of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord.” “*Propter legem tuam.*” What is this law of God? For Jesus Himself it was the infinite love of the Father which permitted the Son of God to become Our Saviour. “Because of Thy holy will, because of this law of love, my Father, I rejoice and hope, though sin reduces me to agony, to crucifixion,

and to death, even the death of the cross!" For the Church militant and suffering, and for each one of us, "the law of the Lord" is the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption, it is Jesus Christ Himself; the Living Law of God, the only object of our hope, who alone can rescue us from the abyss of sin, from the abyss of purgatory. Jesus Christ, known, served, and loved, this is the law of God for humanity, this is the law of God for each one among us.

"My soul hath waited on His word; my soul hath hoped in the Lord." "The Word of God" is again the Incarnate Word, in whom is "the light of men;" it is ever, it is always our dear Lord and Saviour in whom we trust for time and for eternity. "From the morning watch even until night: let Israel hope in the Lord"—"*a custodia matutina usque ad noctem speret Israel in Domino.*" In the Church on earth, and the Church in purgatory, we behold the true Israel, the true people of God. "From the morning watch," that is to say, from the beginning of the world, from the days of Adam, Abel, and Seth, "until night," until the end of time, the Church, and each one of her children, loves, hopes, and believes in Jesus Christ, and through Him alone escapes finally from sin and the punishment that is due to it. In purgatory as upon earth, Israel confides in Jesus Christ, and by being united to Him in heaven will possess in eternity the infinite beatitude it has longed and waited for in time.

"For with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him is plenteous redemption." His merits are infinite because they are divine; and had there been many hundred millions more of sinful souls to save, to purify, to sanctify, the precious blood of Jesus would have flowed ever superabundantly, and would have clothed them all with grace and glory in the presence of the justice of God. It will be He, it will be Jesus who on earth and in purgatory shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities: "*Et ipse redimet Israel ex omnibus iniquitatibus ejus.*"

The De Profundis is therefore a cry of hope, a prayer of love coming forth from the Sacred Heart to be re-echoed by our own; and, while hoping for ourselves, we must hope also for our suffering brethren in purgatory, and we have confidence that if we pray with our whole hearts, our merciful Lord will soon deliver these souls, still dearer to Him than ourselves, and will admit them perfectly purified into peace and eternal rest. "*Et ipse redimet Israel de iniquitatibus ejus.*"

THE MAGNIFICAT.

THE Magnificat is the canticle of thanksgiving inspired by the Holy Ghost to the Blessed Virgin when, after the Annunciation, Mary went to visit her holy cousin Elizabeth, bearing in her virginal womb the Incarnate Son of God.

Elizabeth, at the age of nearly eighty years, had miraculously become the mother of the future precursor of the Messiah, and had been commanded by the Angel Gabriel to give to this child of grace and benediction the mysterious name of John, signifying in Hebrew full of grace. As soon as she perceived Mary, St. Elizabeth felt the infant leap in her womb for joy, coming forth to meet the Blessed Virgin who represented the new alliance and the Christian Church, which possesses, contains, and gives Jesus to the world. Elizabeth represented the ancient alliance, the Jewish Church, Mother of the prophets and of the precursor. The very approach of Jesus and of Mary immediately filled with the Holy Ghost both the mother and the son. St. John the Baptist was presanctified, that is to say, cleansed from original sin in his mother's womb, just as, from the beginning of the human race, Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, Abraham, and the other holy patriarchs—Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, Isaias, and the other holy prophets, as well as all the faithful of the Old Testament, had been presanctified by their faith and hope in the Christ who was to come. Elizabeth, enlightened interiorly as to the mystery of the Incarnation and the divine maternity of Mary, adored Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mother, crying with humility and love: "Whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" And Mary being also filled with the Holy Ghost, who, by the sacred indwelling of her divine Son, completely inundated her most pure soul, replied: "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*"—"my soul doth magnify the Lord." I glorify God the Father who has chosen me for His Spouse, and has made me the Mother of His Eternal Son whom He eternally begets in His infinite glory; I glorify God the Son who has become my Son, my Child, whom I bear within me, to whom I give my flesh, my blood, and my own substance, who, perfect God as He is, my Creator and my Lord, is yet my little Child, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; I glorify God the Holy Ghost, who fills me with His light, with heavenly love, with all His gifts, with all His graces, who has rendered my virginity miraculously fruitful, and who has worked within me the ineffa-

ble mystery of the Incarnation, the central point of religion, the groundwork of creation, the salvation and redemption of sinners, the principle and the end of all things. My soul doth magnify the Lord! "*Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo*".—"and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Peace and joy dwell in the faithful souls where Jesus Christ reposes; the holiest soul is always the most peaceful, the most serene, and the most joyful; love, peace, and joy, with patience, goodness, tenderness, constancy, gentleness, fidelity, modesty, purity, and chastity, are the blessed fruits of the Spirit in a truly Christian soul. What then must have been the joy of the Blessed Virgin, that perfect joy of which Jesus Himself was the most pure source? Jesus her Saviour! Jesus was indeed most truly the Saviour of Mary, not in the sense that He purified her as He purifies us from original and actual sin, and thus opened to her the gate of heaven, but in the sense that by His divine merits He preserved her absolutely from all stain, all sin, all imperfection.

"*Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ*"—"Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." The Blessed Virgin was the humblest of all creatures, and for this reason was she chosen by God. She knew and clearly saw by the light of faith that she was nothing before God, that she depended absolutely upon Him in soul and body, in mind and will, in all her powers, and in her very existence; and, living in this perfect dependence, she annihilated and completely forgot herself in every detail of her life, so completely as to think only of God, to follow only the will of God, to live only for God—in one word, to belong to God alone; and that with a deep and tender love. Such is Christian humility, which seeth not itself from seeing only God, but which is regarded by God with divine complacency. The Blessed Virgin speaks of herself here and at all times as "the handmaid" of the Lord; and well might she call herself this; for this reason it was, and because of this truth, this justice, this simplicity, that God chose her from among all others to be His glorious Mother, the Sovereign Mistress of angels and of men, the Queen of the Church, and the Queen of heaven. The more meek and humble we are, so much the more will Jesus love and regard us with favor, and dwell within our hearts.

"*Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*" *Beata* means both holy and blessed; this is why the Church calls Mary both the "Holy Virgin" and the "Blessed Virgin." All Christian generations from the first unto the last have called, and are still calling, and shall forever call her Blessed; thus regarding with trans-

ports of faith and hope and love, with perfect reverence and tender confidence, the Mother of the Saviour, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Mother of God. And now can it be that they who neither love nor honor her can form a part of the "generations" which, springing here below from the fruitful bosom of the Church, are destined to become hereafter, on the day of their true birth, which is the day of death, children in the heavenly home, children in the eternal kingdom of which Mary is the well-beloved Queen?

"Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est"—"He that is mighty hath done great things unto me." Yes, verily! so great that no creature either in heaven or on earth shall be able to fathom the depth, nor to comprehend the infinite and divine extent of these mysteries and graces. And yet all may be summed up in a single name: the Holy Name of Jesus! Behold what the Blessed Trinity, the living God, in His almighty power and infinite goodness, hath "done unto Mary." Jesus Christ; the mystery of mysteries, the beginning, the principle, the end of the natural order, of the spiritual order, and of the divine order; eternity in time, and time united to eternity; the Divine Life becoming our life, even ours; man becoming the Son of God; yea, becoming God, the only living God, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost reigneth forever and ever. . . . Behold what God hath done unto Mary, unto Mary the Mother of God. All other graces bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin are indeed but the consequence and the radiation of that fundamental grace which is her divine Maternity, or, in other words, the mystery of the Incarnation, even Jesus Christ.

"Et sanctum nomen ejus"—"and holy is His name." Jesus is holy, He only is holy, the Holy One of God, who sanctifieth the saints. The divine Son of Mary is the source of the holiness of the Church and of each one of her members; Mary herself, who gives Jesus to us, is the channel of all holiness and grace.

"Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies timentibus eum"—"and His mercy is from generation to generation unto them that fear Him." But not to the unbelieving and the indifferent, not to those who pass blameless in the eyes of the world, though they live as if there were no God, no Saviour, and no Church. We must fear God as well as love Him; we must fear to offend Him, we must fear His justice, even while we perfectly confide in the tenderness of His compassionate love. It is thus that Christians live, keeping their conscience pure from sin and hoping ever in the divine mercy. Thus they lived under the old dispensation even as under the new; and the

"mercy of God," which is but the grace of pardon and salvation brought into this world by Jesus Christ, was extended to the human race, "*a progenie in progenies*," from Adam till the Deluge, from Noah until Moses, from Moses until the Incarnation, from the Incarnation until the end of the world. Jesus Christ is the living Mercy of God the Father, and it is the office of His Church, as well as of His blessed Mother, to dispense this mercy, and to prove herself the true Mother of mercy and love.

"*Fecit potentiam in brachio suo ; dispersit superbos mente cordis sui*"—"God hath showed strength with His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart." The "proud," who have rebelled against God, thus obliging Him to crush them with the strength of His arm, are, first of all, those rebel angels, with Lucifer at their head, who would neither submit nor obey; they said: "*Non serviam*"—"I will not submit" to the Son of Mary, to the Incarnate Word, to Jesus Christ; and Jesus, the "Arm of God," the omnipotent minister of the Father's will, cast them down from heaven to hell. The "proud" are also those rebellious men who set themselves up in opposition to Jesus Christ, to His Church, to His holy law, and causing earth to echo the fatal formula of hell, repeat also in their turn, either in words or in works: "I will not obey." At the last judgment the "Arm of God" will be uplifted to fall with terrible, eternal weight upon every impenitent sinner. May the sweet and lowly Virgin Mary preserve us from the curse of pride, and may the "Arm of God," the Sacred Hand of Jesus, pierced by our iniquities, never be extended over our heads except to bless us and uplift us to the bosom of the Father.

"*Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles*"—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." This is but a repetition of the same thought. The "mighty" whom Jesus Christ casts down and scatters like the dust are fallen angels and sinful men, and the humble whom He exalts are those faithful Christians who suffer persecution for justice' sake, and whom the world despises because they are like their Master, meek and humble of heart.

"*Esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit inanes*"—"He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away." In this world the disciples of the Saviour must pass through the furnace of penance, tribulation, and tears. "We are fools for Christ's sake," said the Apostle St. Paul: "deceivers and yet true; unknown and yet known; dying and behold we live; chastised and

not killed; sorrowful yet always rejoicing; having nothing and possessing all things." But the worldly, who know not Jesus, do, on the contrary, appear rich while having nothing; powerful while they love only misery and vanity; happy while they have completely wandered from the path of happiness. Jesus is the only principle of true happiness, the only source of joy; He bestows His imperishable gifts upon those who, for His love, renounce the fleeting pleasures of the world; and upon that day when He shall mete out justice, those worthless treasures which men amass with so much care shall be torn forever from their failing grasp. Ah! in eternity how well we shall comprehend this twofold truth. He who has Jesus has everything, he who has not Jesus has nothing!

"*Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiæ suæ*"—"He hath upholden His servant Israel: being mindful of His mercy." In the past God chose a nation whom He treated as a favored servant and a well-beloved child; this nation, this Israel, was to give the Christ, the Lord, the Saviour, to the other nations of the world. The Blessed Virgin clearly proclaims in the Magnificat that the time has arrived, and that the day of glory has dawned upon Israel. Alas, for the unhappy Jewish nation! A small number alone comprehended this glory, opened their eyes to the light of this glorious day and reaped the blessed fruits of the mystery of mercy, of the Incarnation and Redemption of Jesus Christ. At the end of time, Israel, the prodigal child, shall return to the Father's home; Jesus, the Good Shepherd of the human race, shall receive it as He formerly received the Gentile nations, and will be mindful of His mercy, as is foretold by all the Prophets and Fathers of the Church. The Blessed Virgin, who forms the meeting-point between the Old Testament and the New, establishes and renews this consoling prophecy, the fulfilment of which commenced by the first coming of the Saviour, and will be perfectly accomplished by the conversion of the Jews. For the divine canticle terminates with these words: "*Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros: Abraham et semini ejus in secula*"—"As He spake unto our fathers: to Abraham and his seed forever." The Lord who had thus promised to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed (viz., in the Christ who was to spring from his race), was indeed He who, now incarnate in the womb of Mary, was soon to give Himself to the world through her, and thus partly to accomplish the prophecies which He had Himself inspired, "*ad patres nostros*." And at the end of time it will be again through Mary, the Immaculate Virgin, that Jesus Christ will complete the accom-

plishment of all that the Scriptures foretell; He will make her the channel of the grace which shall convert the Jews, and sanctify in a marvellous way the faithful of the latter days; and He will reign first here below and then in heaven with His Blessed Mother, unto all eternity, "*in secula.*"

The Magnificat is part of the Gospel of St. Luke, and is taken from the second chapter. It is a prayer which is wholly divine, and should be often sung and recited; and after Communion, when the same Lord who dwelt with Mary when she uttered this holy canticle is dwelling also in your heart, you cannot choose a better act of thanksgiving than the Magnificat.

THE LAMPS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

LIGHT has always occupied a prominent place in the worship of God. The reason of this fact is a very deep one; but as we do not wish to enter fully into the subject here, it is sufficient to say that light is the most perfect of created substances, that it is the symbol of truth which enlightens the intelligence, and that Our Lord Jesus Christ declared with His own divine lips that He was "the true Light" and the "Light of the world."

For these reasons, and many others, light has always been among Christians an integral part of their outward worship, and particularly of all that relates to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. From the time of the Apostles, when the early Christians were forced to take refuge in the Catacombs and other secret asylums, and to hide their sacred gatherings from all eyes, lights were never omitted; and from that distant time the Church has always shown a special regard for the custom of burning lights during the celebration of the Mass and the divine offices, and also in the veneration which is paid to holy images and the relics of the martyrs.

In the Catacombs of Rome there have been found, among others, magnificent lamps in gold, silver, and brass, in the form of wreaths of flowers, in each of which were burned, before the bodies of the martyrs, a certain number of wicks, replenished day and night by the devotion of the faithful. These luminous crowns were suspended from the vaults of the chapels of the Catacombs, and honored by their brilliancy the sacred relics of those pontiffs, virgins, and martyrs who had remained faithful unto death to Jesus the Light of the World.

When, after centuries of persecution, the Church could openly dis-

play the pomp and grandeur of her ritual, light once more formed an important part of the religious ceremonial. Popes, Christians, and numbers of the faithful, following their example, brilliantly illuminated the new churches with costly lamps, accompanied with endowments for supplying them perpetually with pure oil and light. And thus it is that, fifteen centuries after, we may still see a hundred and forty lamps surrounding, as with a brilliant aureole, the venerable tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, in the basilica of St. Peter at Rome. Forty lamps, always lighted, burn before the relics of St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr; and, indeed, relics are never exposed at Rome for the veneration of the faithful without being honored by lights.

If this is the case with the relics of the saints, we may easily conceive the solicitude with which the Church has always watched to supply at least one burning lamp before the Sacred Body of Our Lord, truly present in the Holy Eucharist; here, again, Rome proves herself the mistress of Catholic devotion, and nothing can be more striking than the effect of the seven lamps which burn in the great churches of Rome before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament.

It is indeed to be desired that everywhere, in the smallest chapel where the Adorable Body of Jesus Christ reposes, the priest and the faithful should have the means constantly to supply a lamp as a mark of their faith in the mystery of mysteries. Coldness of heart, religious indifference, and want of a lively faith must, alas! prevent any manifestation as rich and as costly as in the Holy City; but it is at least necessary that one lamp should burn night and day before the Blessed Sacrament, and thus recall to those who enter the church the Sacred Presence of Our Lord, and bear witness to the faith and devotion of His children.

In poor country parishes, where the priest with his limited means has barely sufficient to supply the wants of those around him and his own simple requirements, why should not some pious women and young girls form an association for the purpose of keeping up the lamps before the Blessed Sacrament in their parish church? One might bring a little oil, and another some wicks, and another might come morning and evening to clean and trim the lamps. The principal person in the association would receive the little subscriptions, the pennies and halfpennies, which would thus make this little work a work for all, for the poor as well as for the rich, and even for little children; and the good priest would be happy in seeing his parishioners anxious to aid him in this simple yet holy action. Soon,

without doubt, great blessings would accompany these servants of the Blessed Sacrament, and religion would flourish in desolate districts which seem abandoned by God.

The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX., animated by a deep and tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, attached a particular importance to keeping lamps always lighted before the tabernacles. He even enriched with an indulgence of seven years every act of piety, whatever it might be, by which the faithful should co-operate in this good work. Thus the poor woman, the poor workman who can do no more, may gain the precious grace of indulgences by giving a drop of oil, a penny, or even a farthing, to honor the Most Holy Sacrament. May the faith and zeal of all be reanimated, and may the Blessed Sacrament of the love of God upon earth be everywhere praised, honored, and glorified!

INDULGENCES AND JUBILEES.

A JUBILEE is an indulgence.

The word indulgence is derived from the Latin, and signifies to show mercy, to abstain from severity. An indulgence is a grace which the Church grants, in the name of Jesus Christ, to repentant sinners whose sins have been already remitted in the Sacrament of Penance. After our sins are pardoned, we must still pay that debt of temporal punishment by which they must be expiated, either in this world or in purgatory. Well, an indulgence is either an entire or a partial remission of this expiation. It does not dispense us from the necessity of doing penance, but it supplies what is wanting through the imperfection of our penances.

In granting indulgences the Pope acts like the steward of some great lord, who, having received full power from his master to manage his affairs, remits the whole of an enormous debt to some debtor who in spite of all his efforts would only have been able to pay a small part.

The Pope says to us, in the name of the Son of God, "Do your best to expiate your sins and to serve God, and by the authority of Him who has said to me: 'Whatever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven,' I remit the rest of your debt which you will not be able to discharge yourself."

A jubilee is the greatest of all the indulgences which the Church grants to her children. It is a special season of grace and pardon. The word signifies joy, gladness, liberty.

Formerly a jubilee was only proclaimed every hundred years, but now, in order that all may profit by it, the Popes have changed this time to every twenty-five years. The Sovereign Pontiffs are also accustomed to grant them upon the occasion of any great joy or affliction in the Church.

The opening of a jubilee in Rome is one of the most impressive sights. The Pope goes in procession, with a long train of attendants, to the Holy Gate, which is one of the gates of the Church of St. Peter. With a silver hammer he strikes three times on the wall which holds this closed gate; the wall is then pulled down by masons, and the Holy Father passes through the first, followed by the Cardinals and the numerous procession which accompanies him. At the end of the jubilee, the Pope, having blessed the stones and cement intended to rebuild the wall, lays the first stone himself with a silver trowel, and the jubilee ends with a solemn benediction given to the immense crowd which always assists at these grand ceremonies.

The whole of this ceremonial is symbolical, like all others in the Christian worship. It signifies that the Pope, by the power he has received from God to loose from sin, really opens the gate of heaven to those who are truly humble and contrite of heart.

In order to gain the indulgence of the jubilee, we must fulfil all the works directed by the Sovereign Pontiff, and with the intention he designs.

These works are usually confession, communion, visits to some churches, fasting, and almsgiving. Each bishop publishes the jubilee in his diocese, with special regulations as to the good works required and the time for gaining the jubilee.

The almsgiving is obligatory for every one; for the poor as well as for the rich, but a penny, a farthing even, is sufficient for the poor.

The jubilee cannot be gained by the Easter Communion except by special permission from the Pope; but one confession will suffice to fulfil the Easter obligation, and also to gain the jubilee.

Those who are sick may obtain from their confessors a commutation of the fasting and the visits to the churches. Children who have not made their first communion may gain the jubilee without fasting and communion, simply by confession, almsgiving, and visiting the churches.

The indulgence of the jubilee being a grace, no one is obliged to gain it; but it would be a sin to neglect so great a benefit through indifference or incredulity.

We hope that all our readers sufficiently understand their own interest to gain their jubilee. What happiness at the moment of death to have nothing more to pay to the infinite justice of God, and to have nothing in perspective but the immediate enjoyment of the happiness of heaven!

THE SCAPULAR.

In Latin the word *scapula* means shoulder; and for many centuries the garment which all workmen wore over their clothes to preserve them from wear and from stains was called for this reason a scapular. It was formed of two wide bands of stuff which joined on the shoulders, and reached to the knees both back and front, leaving a hole in the middle for the head to pass through. But it is very long since this kind of garment was commonly worn, and the scapular has become a religious insignia established by the Carmelites in the thirteenth century. The Carmelite Order, instituted in the earlier ages of Christianity, and always characterized by a special devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, was obliged to abandon the ancient monastery of Mount Carmel in Palestine to avoid the fury of the Turks.

The Carmelite monks took refuge in Europe, where they met with many difficulties, so much so that the Order seemed about to perish, when St. Simon, their Superior, made a last appeal to Heaven to prevent this catastrophe. Redoubling his austerities and his prayers, he offered himself anew with all his brethren to the glorious Queen of heaven, entreating her to come to their aid. His confidence was well founded, and in these words the holy religious related to his brethren the result of his prayer: "My beloved brethren, blessed be God, who never abandons those who hope in Him, and does not despise the prayer of His servants; and blessed be also the Most Holy Virgin, Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, being mindful of His mercy toward His people, makes haste to help us in the midst of the great tribulations which surround us on all sides! To me who am only dust and ashes, as I opened my heart in the presence of God, and asked the Blessed Virgin to grant some unmistakable sign of her protection and love to the ancient religious family of the Carmelites, whom she herself had honored with the title of Brethren of the Blessed Virgin Mary, . . . to me the Holy Mother of God deigned to appear, resplendent with glory, and holding in her hand a mysterious scapular: 'Receive, my son,' she said to me, 'this vest-

ment, which shall be henceforth the distinguishing mark of the Order of Mount Carmel and of my confraternity; it shall be a powerful safeguard to thee and to all thy brethren. Whoever shall live a holy life, and die a holy death wearing this sacred habit, shall avoid the flames of hell, and shall ever be accompanied by my maternal protection.' ”

The religious were all eager to be invested with this scapular, which thus became the glorious livery of the Blessed Virgin; and the Sovereign Pontiffs, approving this pious institution, have enriched with many indulgences not only the Order of the Carmelites, but also a confraternity of the faithful living in the world, and wearing also, beneath their ordinary attire, the scapular of the Blessed Virgin.

It may be easily understood that it then became necessary to modify the size of the ancient scapular, and to replace it by two pieces of brown cloth, united by two cords passing over the shoulders. For us, as for the religious of Mount Carmel, the scapular is a sacred warrant of the protection of the Holy and Immaculate Mother of God, during the whole of our life, and particularly at the moment of death.

Nevertheless, in order to share in the special benedictions promised by the Blessed Virgin, and to gain the indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs, it is not sufficient merely to wear this simple insignia; it is also necessary to be invested with the scapular by a Carmelite, or a priest duly authorized by the Holy See. But it is still more necessary to remember one thing, without which it would be useless to wear all the scapulars in the world; and that is, that if you do not lead a Christian life, if you violate the commandments of God and the laws of His Church, and especially if you profane by immorality this Sacred Scapular bestowed by the most chaste, most holy, and immaculate Virgin Mary, you will not escape the terrible judgments of God, and the promises of the Blessed Mother of God will pass to others who are more worthy.

Receive if possible, and as soon as possible, the holy scapular. The priest who invests you will gladly explain more fully than I can do here the graces with which the Church has enriched the Carmelite Confraternity, and particularly the numerous indulgences attached to it. Among others there is a plenary indulgence to be gained upon the day of reception.





